INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

CASE CONCERNING

ARBITRAL AWARD OF 3 OCTOBER 1899

CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

v.

BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

MEMORIAL OF GUYANA

VOLUME IV

19 NOVEMBER 2018

VOLUME IV

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Annex 100

Letter from Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations to the President of Guyana (12 Nov. 2015)

UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

12 November 2015

Excellency,

As discussed during our meeting of Tuesday 9 November with your Permanent Representative, I attach herewith, for your Government's consideration, our proposal for a way forward in the border controversy between your country and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

This proposal contains the main elements of the proposed involvement of the United Nations as discussed during my visit to Guyana and Venezuela last October. It reflects comments and suggestions received from both Governments as well as the view of the Secretary-General.

As mentioned on Tuesday, I intend to present this proposal to your Government next week in Georgetown, where we can have an initial discussion.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Susana Malcorra
Chef de Cabinet

His Excellency
Mr. David Arthur Granger
President of Guyana
Georgetown

Strictly Confidential

The Way Forward

Further to the requests by both the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Secretary-General aims to exercise his authority under the 1966 Geneva Agreement to facilitate a practical solution to the controversy that has arisen as the result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is null and void.

If a practical solution to the controversy is not found before the end of his tenure, the Secretary-General intends to initiate the process to obtain a final and binding decision from the International Court of Justice. Prior to that moment, the Secretary-General will do his utmost to assist the parties to find a mutually acceptable agreement.

Therefore, the Secretary-General proposes to the parties to proceed as follows:

1. The Governments of Guyana and Venezuela reconfirm that they are determined to exert utmost effort to settle their controversy in an entirely peaceful and amicable manner, and that they will refrain from any action whatsoever that might make more difficult or impede the peaceful and expeditious settlement of the controversy. It is understood that the foregoing is without prejudice to the rights, claims or positions of the parties.

2. Acting under the authority granted to him by the Geneva Agreement and after having consulted with the parties as to possible candidates, the Secretary-General will, no later than December 2015, appoint a mediator to serve as his Personal Representative.

3. The Personal Representative will engage intensively with both parties and offer his or her active assistance in search of a practical solution. The parties will in good faith provide their full cooperation to the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative, including through frequent, regular and substantive meetings at the highest and at working levels.

4. Acting personally or through his Personal Representative, the Secretary-General shall make any confidential non-binding suggestions to the parties that he deems may assist them to reach an agreement. The parties invite the Secretary-General, acting personally or through his Personal Representative, to make confidential non-binding suggestions on any relevant aspects of their bilateral relationship, including its maritime aspects; environmental aspects; their practical cooperation; and shared principles of good neighbourliness. No suggestions shall have any effect whatsoever unless and in so far as they may be included in a mutually acceptable final written agreement signed by the Presidents of the respective Governments.

5. The process shall be conducted in full confidentiality. Only the Secretary-General will, personally or through his Personal Representative, if and when necessary and in consultation with the parties, make public statements on the state of the process. Unless

Strictly Confidential

otherwise agreed with each other and with the Secretary-General or his Personal Representative, the parties shall refrain from making public comments on the state of the process.

6. Except as they may be incorporated in any mutually acceptable final written agreement reached between the parties, all views expressed and statements, admissions and proposals made by either party or by the Secretary-General or his Personal Representative shall be, and shall at all times remain, confidential. Neither party shall be entitled, in any other process or proceedings, to invoke any views expressed or statements, admissions or proposals made by the other party or by or on behalf of the Secretary-General.

7. In March or April 2016 and again during the high-level segment of the General Assembly in September 2016, there shall be trilateral meetings bringing together the Secretary-General and the Presidents of Guyana and Venezuela. These meetings shall review progress to date and shall strive to make significant further progress in the solution of the controversy.

8. The Secretary-General will take stock of progress achieved at the latest in November 2016. The parties aim to have reached a mutually acceptable agreement by that time. If the parties have not reached a mutually acceptable agreement by the time of the stocktaking, the Secretary-General will make his determination as to the choice of means of settlement under the 1966 Geneva Agreement, as set out above.

9. Upon the concurrence of both Governments to the present proposal, the Secretary-General will issue a communiqué setting out the agreed procedure.

ENDS

Estrictamente Confidencial

El camino a seguir

A pedido del Gobierno de la República Cooperativa de Guyana y del Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, el Secretario General tiene la intención de ejercer su autoridad bajo el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966 a fin de facilitar una solución práctica a la controversia derivada del reclamo venezolano de que el laudo arbitral de 1899 sobre la frontera entre la Guayana Británica y Venezuela es nulo y carente de efecto.

Si una solución práctica a la controversia no fuera encontrada antes de que termine su mandato, el Secretario General tiene la intención de iniciar los procedimientos encaminados a obtener una decisión final y obligatoria de la Corte Internacional de Justicia. Hasta ese momento, el Secretario General hará todo lo posible para ayudar a las partes a encontrar un acuerdo mutuamente aceptable.

Por lo tanto, el Secretario General propone a las partes proceder de la siguiente manera:

1. Los Gobiernos de Guyana y Venezuela confirman su determinación de realizar los mayores esfuerzos para encontrar una solución a su controversia en forma enteramente pacífica y amigable, y que se abstendrán de cualquier acción que pudiera dificultar o impedir la solución pacífica y pronta de la controversia. Queda entendido que lo anterior no perjudica los derechos, reclamos y posiciones de las partes.

2. Actuando bajo la autoridad conferida por el Acuerdo de Ginebra y luego de haber consultado a las partes sobre posibles candidatos, el Secretario General nombrará, no más allá de diciembre de 2015, un mediador que lo asistirá como su Representante Personal.

3. El Representante Personal se involucrará intensivamente con ambas partes y les ofrecerá su asistencia activa en la búsqueda de una solución práctica. Las partes brindarán al Secretario General y a su Representante Personal, de buena fe, su mayor cooperación, incluso a través de reuniones frecuentes, habituales y substantivas a los niveles más altos y de trabajo.

4. Actuando personalmente o a través de su Representante Personal, el Secretario General hará sugerencias confidenciales y no vinculantes a las partes, que entienda puedan ayudarlas a llegar a un acuerdo. Las partes invitarán al Secretario General, actuando personalmente o a través de su Representante Personal, a hacer sugerencias no vinculantes sobre cualquier aspecto relevante de su relación bilateral, incluyendo aspectos marítimos; aspectos ambientales; su cooperación práctica; y principios compartidos de buena vecindad. Dichas sugerencias no tendrán absolutamente ningún efecto al menos y en la medida que sean incluidas en un acuerdo final escrito mutuamente aceptable y firmado por los Presidentes de ambos Gobiernos.

Estrictamente Confidencial

5. El proceso se llevará a cabo en forma totalmente confidencial. Sólo el Secretario General, personalmente o a través de su Representante Personal, hará declaraciones públicas sobre la marcha del proceso, siempre y cuando fuera necesario y en consulta con las partes. Salvo acuerdo entre las partes y con el Secretario General o su Representante Personal, las partes se abstendrán de hacer declaraciones públicas sobre la marcha del proceso.

6. Excepto cuando fueran incorporados en cualquier acuerdo final escrito mutuamente aceptable al que hubieran llegado las partes, todos los puntos de vista expresados y declaraciones, admisiones y propuestas hechas por cualquiera de las dos partes o por el Secretario General o su Representante Personal deberán ser confidenciales y se mantendrán así en todo momento. Ninguna parte tendrá el derecho de invocar, en ningún otro proceso o procedimiento, ningún punto de vista expresado o declaraciones, admisiones o propuestas hechas por la otra parte o por o en nombre del Secretario General.

7. En marzo o abril de 2016 y nuevamente durante el segmento de alto nivel de la Asamblea General en setiembre de 2016, se llevarán a cabo reuniones trilaterales que reúnan al Secretario General y los Presidentes de Guyana y Venezuela. Estas reuniones evaluarán el progreso alcanzado hasta la fecha y se esforzarán en lograr avances significativos hacia la solución de la controversia.

8. El Secretario General hará una evaluación del progreso alcanzado a más tardar en noviembre de 2016. Las partes tienen como objetivo lograr un acuerdo mutuamente aceptable para ese entonces. Si las partes no hubieran logrado un acuerdo mutuamente aceptable al momento en que se haga la evaluación, el Secretario General hará su determinación sobre la elección de la forma de arreglo de controversias bajo el Acuerdo de Ginebra, tal como se detalla precedentemente.

9. Luego del acuerdo de ambas partes con la presente propuesta, el Secretario General emitirá un comunicado de prensa detallando el procedimiento acordado.

FINAL

Annex 101

Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the National Assembly (11 Feb. 2016)

(https://www.minfor.gov.gy/)

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Co-operative Republic of Guyana

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NEWS

STATEMENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY HON. CARL GREENIDGE

11
feb



REPUDIATION OF VENEZUELAN 'ESSEQUIBO' STATEMENT

On June 10, 2015, I made a statement in this House on our relations with Venezuela. In that statement I asserted our sovereignty as well as the threats to it and to our territorial integrity posed by Venezuela. I want to bring this House up to date on the most recent and crucially important developments.

On February 4, 2016 the Venezuelan Foreign Minister made a statement at the United Nations Headquarters in New York which contained several falsehoods and innuendoes as these relate to the territory of Guyana.

The Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana repudiates in its entirety the Statement issued by the Venezuelan Foreign Minister. The Statement to which I refer is titled "Venezuela ratifies its rights over the Essequibo at the UN", and will be circulated to the Honourable Members of the House.

That statement is yet another example of Venezuela's time-worn belief that falsehoods repeated often enough may eventually lose their basic falsity. They do not.

Venezuela has no 'rights over the Essequibo'.

Guyana's rights over the Essequibo were settled by the Award of 1899 of the international Tribunal of Arbitration established under the Treaty of Washington of 1897. The Government of Venezuela undertook that award to be "a full, perfect and final settlement of all the questions referred to the Arbitrators". And may I remind you, Venezuela did accept the decision. It did so jointly with the United Kingdom. Together they demarcated the boundary on the ground and drawing up a definitive map depicting the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela identifying the Essequibo as being within British Guiana – in accordance with the 1899 Arbitral Award.

1

But there were always in Venezuela elements who wanted more, and for whom the birth of an independent Guyana seemed to threaten their greed and posed a threat to their

imperialist crusade, so they tried to prevent it, contending with Britain that the Arbitral

Award of 1899 was “null and void”. Britain resisted them; their final rejection being the

Geneva Agreement of 1966 which acknowledged that Guyana would be free, and ensured that Venezuela could not pursue its “nullity” contention against the new state save in specified ways starting with a Mixed Commission and empowering the United Nations Secretary General to bring the contention to finality by judicial settlement, consonant with the Charter of the United Nations.

From the outset, Venezuela delayed pursuing their nullity contention; pursuing instead a policy of harassment of the new state, impeding its development by threatening investors. It kept Guyana out of the OAS for 25 years. Contemptuous of international law, it has issued decrees asserting maritime claims progressively more and more outrageous. And it remains one of the few countries of the world to have excluded itself from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

And now in the statement to which I have referred, Venezuela seeks to move away from its “nullity” contention and to imply that the Geneva Agreement is about a ” historical position” and a “territorial controversy”. Further, that statement seeks to embrace the Agreement, even as it attempts to rewrite it. Guyana totally rejects these backhanded attempts to despoil Guyana of her rights. Guyana accepts the Geneva Agreement for what it is. It is not surprised that Venezuela on the other hand accepts that agreement as it would wish it to be.

When on 4th April 1966 the UN Secretary-General (then, H.E. U Thant) acknowledged receipt of the Geneva Agreement, he responded:

I have made note of the obligations that eventually can fall on the Secretary General of the United Nations by virtue of Paragraph 2 of Article IV of the Agreement and it pleases

me to inform you that the functions are of such a nature that they can be appropriately carried out by the Secretary General of the United Nations.

2

Last year, Guyana's President, H.E. David Granger, called on the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to have Venezuela's contention that the Arbitral

Award of 1899 is null and void and settled with finality by judicial process. By the Geneva Agreement both Guyana and Venezuela have empowered him to do so.

Venezuela's behavior towards Guyana is a festering wound to peace and development in our region and an affront to the rule of law in the world. It must be healed by the process of law.

As Honourable Members are aware, the UN Secretary General has had discussions with both Guyana and Venezuela and has made proposals for "The Way Forward". Guyana has been cooperating with him, and will continue to do so. Venezuela, however, seems prepared to derail the process. In this 50th anniversary of the Geneva Agreement which was signed on February 17, 1966, Venezuela should be seeking to fulfill the objectives of that Agreement and not frustrate them under a cloak of righteousness. Guyana will not allow the deceptions being peddled by Venezuela to persist.

The people of Venezuela are our sisters and brothers and Guyana has always held out the hand of friendship to them, and, continues to do so. But there are forces in Venezuela who made it their life's mission, abusing in the process, the hallowed memory of Bolivar, to hold Guyana hostage to their crusade of greed.

Guyana is a child of decolonization. Its ancestry lies in the Charter of the United Nations

– its purposes and principles. Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity are its international heritage. We will remain faithful to the demands of both; and we look to the

international community to stand with us in Venezuela's assaults upon them.

It is my hope that the National Assembly will lend its full support to my Statement as we continue in our collective endeavor to defend Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Statement will be brought to the attention of the Secretary General of the United Nations, the members of the Security Council and the wider membership of the United Nations.

I thank you.

3

Featured (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Featured/), Guyana Venezuela Controversy (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Guyana-Venezuela-Controversy/), Minister's Speeches (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Ministers-Speeches/), News (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/News/), Statements (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Statements/)

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18 Oct



Singapore Ambassado CARICOM Ca On Foreign Minister (Https://Ww Ambassado Caricom-Cal On-Foreign-Minister/)

Annex 102

Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, *Proceedings and Debates of the National Assembly of the First Session (2015-2016) of the Eleventh Parliament of Guyana under the Co-operative Republic of Guyana held in the Parliament Chamber, Public Buildings, Brickdam, Georgetown* (11 Feb. 2016)

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

27TH Sitting — Thursday, 11th February, 2016

Assembly convened at 1.12 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Resignation of Dr. Clive Jagan

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I was informed, by way of letter dated Wednesday, 10th February, 2016 from Dr. Clive Ramesh Jagan, that he has resigned his seat as a Member of Parliament with effect from that date. With Dr. Jagan's resignation, a seat in the National Assembly has become vacant. The vacancy is in accordance with Section 99A of the Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03 to be filled by a person whose name is to be extracted from the list of candidates from which Dr. Jagan's name was extracted. As Dr. Jagan's name was extracted from the People's Progressive Party/Civic's (PPP/C) list of candidates, I have, in accordance with Section 99A of the said Act, called upon the representative of the said list to further extract from that list the name of a person who is willing to become a Member of the National Assembly to fill the vacancy in the Assembly.

Visit by Representatives of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Canadian Branch

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have two sets of guests today. We have, visiting from Canada, representatives of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Canadian Branch. This is part of the collaboration and cooperation which occurs among branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I have had the pleasure of having discussions with our visitors, the beginning of what we hope will be very interesting engagements. I would like to say, on behalf of the Assembly, welcome. I hope that your presence in our deliberations will leave you with memories and I hope that, as I told you when we spoke, this will only be the first visit. Welcome again. You will, Hon. Members, want to – and I ask our visitors to allow me to - specially mention reference to the High Commissioner of Canada, Mr. Pierre Giroux, who is here, and I believe that he has come to the National Assembly before today. So, an additional welcome to him.

Visit by Students of President's College

Mr. Speaker: The second set of visitors, I am told, is a group of 50 strong. Those visitors are students of President's College. You will recall that, yesterday, we had a smaller contingent from President's College. This is a larger one and I am told that none of the ones who came yesterday are among those who are here today. Welcome. As I said to your fellow students yesterday, I hope being with us will leave you with much food for thought. So welcome.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

Venezuelan Statement on Essequibo

Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mr. Greenidge]: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If it pleases you, I would like to deliver a statement in connection with a matter pertaining to a Venezuelan statement on Essequibo.

On Wednesday, 10th June, 2015, I made a statement, in this House, on our relations with Venezuela in which I asserted our sovereignty and the threats posed by Venezuela to it and our territorial integrity. I would like to bring Hon. Members up to date on the most recent and crucially important developments in this regard.

On Thursday, 4th February, 2016, the Venezuelan Foreign Minister made a statement at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York, which contained several falsehoods and innuendos as these relate to the territory of Guyana.

The Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana repudiates, in its entirety, the statement issued by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela. Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, the statement which I refer to is entitled: "Venezuela ratifies its rights over the Essequibo at the UN" and it will be circulated to the Hon. Members of this House. That statement is yet another example of Venezuela's time-worn belief that falsehoods repeated often enough may eventually lose their basic falsity. They do not. Venezuela has no rights over the Essequibo.

Guyana's rights over the Essequibo, on the other hand, were settled by the Award of 1899 of the International Tribunal of Arbitration established under the Treaty of Washington of 1897, whose decision the Government of Venezuela undertook to accept, "...as a full, perfect and final settlement of all the questions referred to the arbitrators." Venezuela did accept the decision jointly with the United Kingdom, demarcating the boundary on the ground and drawing up a definitive map depicting the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela, identifying Essequibo as being within British Guiana in accordance with the 1899 Arbitral Award. But there was always, in Venezuela, elements who wanted more and for whom the birth of an independent Guyana seemed to end their imperialist crusade, so they tried to prevent it, contending with Britain that the Arbitral Award of 1899 was null and void. Britain resisted them, their final rejection being the Geneva Agreement of 1966 which acknowledged that Guyana would be free and ensured that Venezuela could not pursue its nullity contention against the new State, save in specified ways, starting with a mixed commission and empowering the United Nations Secretary General to bring the contention to finality by judicial settlement consonant with the Charter of the United Nations.

From the outset, Venezuela delayed the pursuing of the annulity contention, pursuing, instead, a policy of harassment of the new State, impeding its development by threatening investors. It kept Guyana out of the Organization of American States (OAS) for 25 years. Contemptuous of international law, it has issued decrees asserting maritime claims progressively more and more outrageous. It remains one of the few countries of the world to have excluded itself from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Now, in the statement to which I have referred, Venezuela seeks to move away from its nullity contention and to imply that the Geneva Agreement is about "a historical position" and a "territorial controversy" and seeks to embrace the agreement even as it attempts to rewrite it. Guyana totally rejects these backhanded attempts to despoil Guyana of her rights. Guyana accepts the Geneva agreement for what it is. It is not surprising that Venezuela accepts it as it would wish it to be.

When, on Monday, 4^{th} April, 1966 the United Nations Secretary General, then His Excellency U Thant, acknowledged receipt of the Geneva Agreement, he responded: "I have made note of the obligations that eventually can fall on the Secretary General of the United Nations by virtue of paragraph 2 of Article IV of the Agreement and it pleases me to inform that the functions are of such a nature that they can be appropriately carried out by the Secretary General of the United Nations."

Last year, Guyana's President, His Excellency David Granger, called on the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to have Venezuela's contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 is null and void and settled with finality by the judicial process. By the Geneva Agreement, both Guyana and Venezuela have empowered him to do so. Venezuela's behaviour towards Guyana is a festering wound to peace and development in our region and an affront to the rule of law in the world. It must be healed by a process of law.

As Hon. Members are aware, the UN Secretary General has had discussions with both Guyana and Venezuela and has made proposals for "the way forward". Guyana has been cooperating with him and will continue to do so. Venezuela, however, seems prepared to derail the process. In this 50^{th} anniversary of the Geneva Agreement, which was signed on Thursday, 17^{th} February, 1966, Venezuela should be seeking to fulfil the objectives of that Agreement and not frustrate them under a cloak of righteousness. Guyana will not allow the deceptions being peddled by Venezuela to persist.

1.27 p.m.

The people of Venezuela are our sisters and brothers and Guyana has always held out the hand of friendship to them and continues to do so, but there are forces in Venezuela, who made it their

life's mission, abusing the hallowed memory of Bolívar, to hold Guyana hostage to their crusade of greed.

Guyana is a child of decolonisation. Its ancestry lies in the Charter of the United Nations, its purposes and principles. Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity are its international heritage. We will remain faithful to the demands of both and we look to the international community to stand with us in Venezuela's assaults upon them.

It is my hope that the National Assembly will lend its full support to my statement, as we continue in our collective endeavour to defend Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The statement will be brought to the attention of the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Members of the Security Council and the wider membership of the United Nations.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The following Bills were introduced and read for the first time:

MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 3/2016

A BILL intituled:

> "An Act to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 4/2016

A BILL intituled:

> "An Act to amend the Financial Administration and Audit Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

CUSTOMS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 5/2016

A BILL intituled:

> "An Act to amend the Customs Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 6/2016

A BILL intituled:

"An Act to amend the Income Tax Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

MISCELLANEOUS LICENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 7/2016

A BILL intituled:

"An Act to amend the Miscellaneous Licences Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

AUCTIONEERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 8/2016

A BILL intituled:

"An Act to amend the Auctioneers Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

HUCKSTERS LICENSING AND CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 9/2016

A BILL intituled:

"An Act to amend the Hucksters Licensing and Control Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016 – Bill No. 10/2016

A BILL intituled:

"An Act to amend the Tax Act." *[Minister of Finance]*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET 2016

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2016

"WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2016 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2016-01-29.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2016, of a total sum of two hundred and twelve billion, nine hundred and sixty three million and one hundred and thirty two thousand dollars **($212,963,132,000), excluding seventeen billion and seventy three million, three hundred and ninety four thousand dollars ($17,073,394,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance." *[Minister of Finance]*

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The privilege is mine to make my humble contribution to the debate in relation to the 2016 Budget. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our distinguished guests from Canada and, of course, His Excellency the High Commissioner. Like you, Sir, I hope that their stay here would be memorable.

I also would like to extend a warm welcome to a full gallery of students, from President's College, who are with us today.

Sir, I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our deepest sympathy to three Amerindian brothers who, I understand, have just been killed in a horrific accident in the Rupununi. They have our deepest sympathy.

I wish to begin by offering my congratulations to the Minister of Finance and, of course, his competent staff for presenting and preparing the 2016 Budget. I have listened to the debates from both sides of the House. I have listened to the almost utopian outpourings which have emanated from the Government's side in relation to the absolute perfection with which this Budget is blessed and I have listened to the realistic and pragmatic arguments coming from this side of the House, and I say that I stand proudly with the pragmatists in our today's debate.

I want to begin by beginning with the very title of the Budget. The Budget is titled: "*Stimulating Growth, Restoring Confidence: The Good Life Beckons*". I thought it curious and indeed courageous that the Minister would choose growth in his title as part of his speech because, when I looked at his figures chronicled in his Budget, it is the first year that this coalition Government has assumed governmental office; it is the first year that it has taken control and management of the economy of this country and it is the first year that we are recording our lowest economic growth in 10 successive years - 3.0%. That is the Minister's figure. [**An Hon. Member:** A sign of things to come.] It is a sign, hopefully, not of things to come. I am a patriot; I want the best for my country. I hope that, in future, the Minister will have a better performance to report in his next budget. But many persons out there have a difficulty in accepting even the 3% growth rate for the year 2015 that is reported in the Budget.

While we may use macroeconomic mechanisms, the Bureau of Statistics and the Central Bank to generate figures which establish growth rate, the real barometer, for me, is the views of the people out there who live in the economy. Their views are what, to me, are important. I spoke with a wide cross section of Guyanese: I spoke with the market vendor; I spoke with the professional; I spoke with the public servant; I spoke with the horse cart man; I spoke with the taxi driver; I spoke with the lawyer; I spoke with the businessman on Regent Street; and they all said that, in 2015, they experienced a horrible year. They said that money was not circulating. They said that their businesses performed badly. They said that they experienced the worst Christmas in decades. That is their view, so we can, in this air conditioned, very comfortable

setting, speak about high growth rates, but the people out there have a different reality in which they are living.

When one looks at the figures and the productive sector, then one sees that the views that the persons out there have expressed are really borne out because, in the productive sectors, as reported by the Hon. Minister, there was an increase in rice but we all know the reality that there is no market for rice. The rice was reaped but it is still in the factories; it is still at the wharf; it is still in the storage bond and it is rotting there. So, the rice farmers are in financial chaos.

The sugar workers increased production but they were not paid their Annual Performance Incentive (API) because the world market price was low.

The construction sector is suffering from inertia because the Government has basically torpedoed the previous Government's housing drive. So, one of three ready-mix concrete companies now is up for sale; construction is on the decline. Gold prices remain stagnant in the world market and there is no increase in production here. The Government's efforts to grant concessions to the miners have been stymied because of a requirement that the Government put into the concession that the miners must get tax compliance. Of course, the miners find that a nightmare so none of the concessions which they were granted are being enjoyed by them. So, in all the major productive sectors in the economy, they are not performing. That is why the man in the street is questioning the Minister's growth figure.

To *rub salt in the injury*, the Hon. Minister, in a contracting economy, in a depressing economy, reports to this House and to the people out there that there are no reported job losses - an astonishing statement. Persons stop me in the streets and ask me if we cannot do something about statements being made in the National Assembly that are completely out of sync with reality. Persons who have been dismissed are hearing that there are no reported job losses. They want to know if they have become phantoms. They are not recorded anymore in this country; 1,972 Amerindians, hundreds of employees in the public sector and the private sector have been dismissed. I have filed, in the High Court, several actions for dismissal, whether the dismissals are wrongful or not is a matter for the Court, but the dismissals have taken place and the Minister is saying that there are no reported job losses. So, people out there are questioning the Minister's figures and that is not a healthy thing.

What the people out there find very unnerving is another statistical data disclosed by the Minister and that is the exchange rate. The Minister reported, in his Budget, that the United States (US) dollar is changing at $206.50 to the US dollar.

1.42 p.m.

That the people find as a total outrage, because when the man from the Rupununi goes to the cambio he has to pay $210 and $212; when the comrade from D'Urban Street goes to the cambio on King Street he pays $210 and $212; when the comrade from Black Bush Polder goes to the cambio in Rose Hall he pays $210 and $212. The distinguished and Hon. Minister is telling the House that the United States dollar is changing at $206. The people out there want to know where these figures are coming from because they are living a different reality.

I wanted to know where the boost in revenue came from because the Minister reported that there has been an increase in revenue. When I carefully checked the budget I saw the transfers coming from the extra budgetary funds, from the statutory agencies, a total of $9 billion taken from these agencies which were claimed to be illegal. That is where the surplus came from. It did not come from economic activities, officially. It came from moneys that were put there under this Government. What is more fundamental is, the press would recall, the people out there would recall, and Your Honour would recall, that there was a long and dedicated campaign by the Hon. Members of that side when they were on this side to remove these moneys and place them in the Consolidated Fund. All manner of arguments were advanced. They said that it was unlawful; they said that it was unconstitutional; they said that it was being kept in those funds for corrupt purposes. They brought a motion to this House; they brought a motion in the High Court challenging the legality of these moneys. Now they are in Government and nine months after they are refusing to transfer these moneys. We call upon them to transfer every single cent of the extra budgetary funds into the Consolidated Fund. The Lotto Fund has over $28 billion but they have only transferred $1 million. Are they keeping $27 billion for corrupt purposes? Let them transfer it now. That is what they said. Let them deliver.

We were told that growth comes from consumers' spending, comes from investment, from Government's spending and from net export. I looked at the factors in the budget to see what would stimulate this growth the Minister spoke about. Of course, there is going to be

Government's spending, because we are told that there is the highest Government injection in to the economy in any given financial year, thus far. Yes, we know there is going to be Government's spending but we also know - the Minister will know much more than I do - that Government's spending alone cannot propel the economy forward, cannot bring the desired growth that he aspires to achieve. I am looking for the measures in the budget that will inspire the growth the Minister is speaking of. What I find is that the opposite is contained in the budget.

There is an over reliance on taxation in the budget. Everyone here would have witnessed the Minister is bringing a slew of legislation to the House just now. All of those legislations are designed to impose additional taxes on the people of this country. From 2008 to 2014, our last budget - as the Hon. Member Gail Teixeira reminded us yesterday – there were no additional taxes by our Government. In fact, every year we designed different measures to reduce the tax burden. Here there is a slew of measures which are designed to increase the taxation burden and then widen it. The net is so wide, it captures from man to mule. No one is exempted. That is not the type of model that would achieve the stimulated growth that the Minister aspires to achieve. When there is increased taxation and salaries are not raised to a proportionate level, then it is taking away from the consumer the disposable earnings. How are we going to get the growth, Mr. Minister?

I ask that the Minister reviews the taxation burden he is imposing on the backs of the people of this country. This budget has no new salary announced, but a dozen and a half, or more, of taxation impositions. There is not a single budgetary salary increase. We are told that we have to wait on collective bargaining but the tax measures are coming immediately.

Another important omission of this budget, if it wants to advance growth, is the lack of a regime of tax concessions that will attract investments and encourage consumers' spending. What the Minister has done, and he does it very grudgingly, is to assess the volume of concessions granted and has placed a value on it, and essentially he advances the theoretical argument that our economy cannot afford these concessions. Well, to the distinguished Minister, I say with the greatest of respect that that is a very myopic view to take of concessions. You have to look at the concession, but not in isolation, Sir. You have to look at the concessions then measure it against the investment it will ease; you have to be measure it against the jobs it will create; you have to measure it against the spending it will generate and then you will get the true picture of

what the investment is, what the concessions are. The ideology expressed in this budget is that concession is a bad thing, so it must be reduced. That will not foster, it will not induce and it will not engender the economic growth the Minister spoke about.

The Minister said – it is a good intentioned – that he will incorporate a new set of procedures which are intended to make business easier to remove red tapes to overcome bureaucratic hurdles and to reduce corruption and advance efficiency, very high idealistic principles. I wish him all the best. The problem is that in the very same budget he announced a peculiar budgetary measure. He said that before one can get a public licence in this country the applicant must satisfy the agency to which he is applying that all his tax returns are in order, that he has paid all his taxes, or that he has an arrangement to pay off all his taxes. That will lead to a bureaucratic nightmare and that will be a breeding ground for corruption.

First of all, the Minister when he imposes that new measure - it is being imposed - he does not speak about the institutional building of the capacity of Guyana Revenue Authority to deal with the traffic of applications it will receive when the new measure is imposed. The Guyana Revenue Authority is the same organisation with nothing to improve it, human resources otherwise. [**An Hon. Member:** The first duty is to pay your taxes.] Yes, the first duty is to pay your taxes, but at the same time you also have to increase the state's ability to collect the taxes. That is what I am saying. When the first wave of applicants go, when the mule cart driver goes there for his licence, the minibus driver goes for his licence, the grocer goes for his licence, the shopkeeper goes for his licence, they are all told that they have to get their tax return in order. They have to pay off their back taxes. Can you imagine the confusion that would take place?

Significantly, there are some legal implications as well with these licences. There is something fundamentally and conceptually wrong with using one set of legislation as an enforcement mechanism, to enforce obligations on another set of legislation. [**Mr. Ramjattan:** There is absolutely nothing wrong with that.] I will deal with that just now. There is something fundamental wrong with it. If there are violations of the Tax Act, if there are violations of the Income Tax Act, if there are violations of the Corporate Tax Act, then these pieces of legislation have their enforcement mechanisms. Use them and go after the defaulters. Do not burden another set of legislation with the responsibility and duty of enforcing this set of legislation. It is not that

we are without precedent on this matter. In 2003, we amended our Constitution and made, as fundamental right, the right to work. Article 149A of our Constitution now reads:

> "No person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his or her right to work, that is to say, the right to free choice of employment."

No person shall be hindered in his right to work. There is no condition attached to it. When the minibus driver goes to renew his licence, and that is his work, and then he is told that he has to satisfy another set of conditions, Sir, you may be in a collision course with the Constitution of the country. As I said, we are not without precedent. I implore my honourable friend Mr. Ramjattan to listen to me.

A few years ago we implemented a similar measure here in relation to professionals. We amended the Tax Act to say that professionals, before they get their Tax Practice Certificate, must file updated tax returns. Not that they must pay their taxes; not that they must enter into an arrangement to pay, but they must at least file their tax record. Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan went into the witness box in the court. Legal proceedings were filed by the doctor, the accountant, the lawyer, and the engineer through their respective associations. After 14 years that matter is still ongoing. Mr. Ramjattan went into the witness box. [***Interruption***]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, let us not allow ourselves to be carried away.

Mr. Nandlall: It is because he is speaking. The Hon. Member, himself, went into the witness box to depose how unlawful it was. Integrity in public office is important, Sir. I move on.

1.57 p.m.

Vice-President and Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order, Standing Order 41 (2). Could I please correct what…because it would appear? It is misleading this House as to two matters. The matter is *sub judice* and he is raising it here to begin with. Secondly, he is misleading the House. The taxes were increased from $10,000 as we know to $250,000 and the constitutional motion, which I brought, was that it was oppressive, the Tax Practice Certificate. Please let him get it right.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, you are aware that we ought not, in this House, to raise as issue matters which are before the court. I would suggest….

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, if I may? It is not…

Mr. Speaker: You may not, but you will listen to me now. You are aware that the Standing Orders do not allow us to make mention of matters which are before the court. You are also aware that this matter is still before the court. I would suggest that you do what you know that you should do in this matter.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, the Standing Orders do not state that you cannot mention a matter that is in court. The Standing Order states that you cannot mention the matter in such a way as to prejudice the proceedings. That is what the Standing Order states.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I shall read the Standing Orders to you.

Mr. Nandlall: Do I sit or do I stand, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you may sit. It would be helpful to all other Hon. Members. Standing Order 41 (2):

> "Reference shall not be made to any matter which is *sub judice*, in such a way as might,…"

I would emphasise the words following.

> "…in the opinion of the Chair, prejudice the interest of parties thereto".

I would think that a reference, which includes gratuitous expression such as "integrity in office", in the same breath as you were making the point, should not form part of your presentation here today. I will invite you to withdraw it and start again. You are fully capable of doing all the things you want to do and saying all that you want to say without gratuitously importing matter which you know you ought not to do.

Mr. Nandlall: Is it that integrity is important to public office. That is a statement of fact.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you withdrawing the reference?

Mr. Nandlall: Which reference, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: It is the reference to the case before the court at this time; the reference to the discussion as to who went into the box; the reference as to who argued the motion in relation to the income tax…

Mr. Nandlall: I maintain, Sir, that there is a challenge in the court against…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the Speaker has asked you a question. I recommend that you withdraw it and start again.

Mr. Nandlall: I want to reference to a case that is pending in the court and I wish to assure Your Honour that I will not say anything to prejudice the outcome of those proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I give you that but give the Chairman what is provided, and that is, to determine whether in his opinion it is likely to do that.

Mr. Nandlall: Could I make the statement then, Sir, and then you will judge?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I await your response to my request.

Mr. Nandlall: I would like to say, Sir, that there are proceedings pending which challenges the legality of a provision in the Tax Act which requires persons who are to obtain a Tax Practice Certificate to first file their returns. There is such a proceedings pending in the court.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, am I to take it that you withdraw the references to a particular Hon. Member in here?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Then you should tell us.

Mr. Nandlall: I wanted to know what you want me to withdraw, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am waiting for the withdrawal then you may proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: I withdraw the statement in which I mentioned the Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan name.

Mr. Speaker: I accept that, Hon. Member. You may proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes. Sir, I am humbly and respectfully cautioning the Hon. Minister of Finance to expect a slew of litigation in relation to some of these measures which impose burdens on the taxpayer in relation to one set of legislation to enforce another set of legislation. That is an eventuality that the Hon. Member would have to confront with soon.

The other issue is with growth, because that is the title of the budget "Stimulating Growth…" Now we cannot put the words "stimulating growth" on the title of a budget and that by itself will cause growth. We have to ensure that there are policies and programmes that can achieve the growth that we speak about in glossy print. That is what I want to speak to quickly, some of the measures.

Firstly, I implore this Government to demonstrate to the people of our country that they respect and that they will protect private property because there were a series of incidents in which persons, who have been issued with transports and certificates of title and are living in their homes, were being ejected from their homes with notices being erected by the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA) stating that it is in the property of Central Housing and Planning Authority and persons' titles and transports are being revoked.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40 (a). Again, the Hon. Member is referring to a matter that is before the courts of Guyana. The matter before the court was actually initiated by him and we are asking him, Sir, to desist.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his intervention.

Mr. Nandlall: I am representing the interest of dozens of people with whose property is being taken away by the state. That is the contention that they are advancing, whether it is in court or not, it will never be a gag against me speaking on it. An injustice remains an injustice whether it is litigated or not. Litigation is to bring justice, not to perpetuate injustice.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, your words will still remain the same. Do not expend so much energy. Please proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: Injustice has that effect on me, Sir. When we speak about growth, growth comes from investment, it comes from spending. People will not invest in an economy; they will not spend in an economy and they will not be growth in an economy where private property is not protected. That is the fundamental point here.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, even with pause you have five minutes remaining.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, the Points of Order are usually not included in the calculation of time for speakers because there is a pause. Otherwise, this could be a measure, Sir, that every time we speak on this side, Points of Order are raised and it takes away time from us.

Secondly, Sir, in relation to the Hon. Member time, excluding the Points of Order, he, therefore, has a total of 35 minutes and I am seeking the five minutes extension within that 35 minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I thank you for your intervention. Hon. Member, you will speak for a total of 35 minutes. There is one point to be clarified. The Speaker has observed the practice, which he observed yesterday, and that he has observed in every debate here, when matters are prolonged the timer goes on hold. It begins again when the Hon. Member, again, returns to his statement. There ought not to be any further comments on this, Hon. Members, unless you feel that your timing should be preferred to mine.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I spoke about the importance of respecting private property.

Another important issue that needs to be reviewed by the Hon. Minister of Finance, another policy, is the use of Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU). The reports, which have received, are that SOCU is violating the rights of people. It is inimical the way that it is conducting its business; it is inimical to the economic interest of this country. People's moneys are being seized in whimsical manner. Their jewelleries are being taken from them at the airport. That cannot be stimulating to growth. We are asking for a review of SOCU. It was set up also for a completely different purpose which is to examine and investigate genuine cases of money laundering and terrorism, not to be unleashed on the people of this country.

I want to call on the Government, that if it wants to restore confidence in the economy then it must observe the procurement laws of this country. It cannot hand-pick contractors and give them millions and millions of dollars of contract without any transparent process, and in disregard of the procurement process.

We demand also the consumers must enjoy the reduction that is taking place with fuel prices, that is, the real reduction. We want the electricity tariffs to drop.

2.12 p.m.

We also want gas at the pump to reduce because that is important to simulate growth. We also want the ban to be reviewed on vehicles. A lot has been spoken about in relation to cars and the auto dealers have spoken. Do not bother with us. The auto dealers have issued a statement. They have said that the cars will go up by nearly $2 million beyond the reach… [**An Hon. Member:** Who dealer?] It is the Auto Dealers Association, the umbrella body. It will go beyond the reach of the ordinary consumer, but that is not who I am worried about. The budget speaks about growth. I am worried about the productive sector - the agricultural equipment, the construction equipment. I have here a list of prices of trucks and motor lorries and capital equipment that are now being imported that are 15 years old. I want to give the likely price that it will be if the new ban is imposed and the importers are forced to bring in vehicles that are eight years and under.

A Bedford single axle truck, now, is $6 million; it will become $18 million. A double axel truck is $9 million; it will be $27 million. A hauler, that is, the truck that pulls the container, double axel, is now $7 million; it will be $20 million. A Caterpillar excavator 312 is now $12 million; it will be $24 million. A 320 excavator is $15 million; it will be $36 million. A grader is now $28 million; it will be $68 million. I have a whole list. Construction will stagnate in this country. Only special interests are going to benefit, not the ordinary contractors out there. The special ones, such as the "bs", are going to benefit.

I want to move quickly to the legal sector. My learned friend, the Hon. Attorney General, who is scheduled to speak after me, will have to report on a number of things. He will speak about the opening of the Land Registry and Commercial Registry on Avenue of the Republic. I hope that he will say that that is a People's Progressive Party (PPP)'s Government project. He will speak

about the construction going on in the compound at Georgetown High Court where a building is being erected to house two judges of the Land Court and Registry. I hope he will say that that is PPP project. Construction will soon begin at Sparendaam to erect an edifice that will house two magistrate's courts and chambers for the magistrates. I hope he that he will say that that is a PPP project. He will open, this year, the Family Court. I hope that he will recognise that that is a PPP project. He will also open the Lethem Magistrate's Court later this month. I hope that he will say that that is a PPP project. He will announce the establishment of a new office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Berbice. I hope that he will say that that is a PPP project. Other than that, he has nothing else to say. I have read the budget and there is nothing there from the legal sector.

As I wrap up, Sir, I looked at the entire Estimates and I was wondering where the growth will come from and then I stumbled on the list of the expenditures on the item dietary. I found in 2014 the Government spent $3.6 billion in dietary. In 2016, we are budgeting $4.8 billion in dietary, an increase of $1.2 billion on dietary. We will have growth, but it will not be economic growth.

I thank you very much Sir. [*Applause*]

Minister of Social Cohesion [Ms. Ally]: It is with a great sense of pride that I rise before this august body to, firstly, commend my colleague, Hon. Minister of Finance, for creating history in our country, by presenting two national budgets within eight months. Sir, you have demonstrated the brilliance required of a Minister of Finance, and I have to say that we on this side of the House are proud of you. This is the calibre of leadership Guyana needs to philip our country to the next level.

Secondly, I unreservedly offer my support to Budget 2016, under the theme *Stimulating Growth, Restoring Confidence: The Good Life Beckons*. The theme speaks volumes and underscores the Government's pro-poor philosophy. Our quest is to engender social and economic growth, rekindle confidence, locally as well as in the diaspora and ultimately offers every Guyanese the “good life."

This budget is geared to include all Guyanese. It sets out to create scope for Guyanese to be included in the development of our beloved country. Beyond inclusion, there are opportunities for participation in the growth and development of our country. The budget goes beyond

consideration for the richness of our economy. Rather it focuses on the richness of human lives. This is about development with a human face. This is the development Guyana needs. Let us look, for instance, at where the greatest emphasis is, it is on education, but I would leave my honourable colleague, the Minister of Education, to address that.

There is a striking nexus between this budget and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. I will get there, do not worry, Ms. Teixeira.

Goal 1 speaks to the ending of poverty in all its forms. This budget is tailored to reduce poverty. Mr. Speaker, irrespective of what is being touted to the contrary, this budget, Sir, is friendly to the poor as it includes:

- Increase in rebates granted by Guyana Power and Light Inc.
- Reduction in the price of fuel.
- Increase in Income Tax threshold from \$600,000 to \$660,000, which would benefit a minimum of 65,000 workers. In our country, people would have more disposable income.
- The removal of excise tax on vehicles under four years old and below 1500 cc.
- Removal of Income Tax from income earned by artistes during festivities, once it is certified by the Minister responsible for tourism.

This budget is truly friendly to the poor and is designed to offer every Guyanese the “good life”, as envisioned by the President.

As I reflect on Goal 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which is:

> “Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provision of access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”

We are speaking directly here to the role of the Ministry of Social Cohesion, in fostering a peaceful and inclusive society. On that note, only a visionary would consider the need for a Ministry of Social Cohesion, but one, whose thinking is warped, would rename it the Ministry of Social Bribery. It is my task, as Minister, to lead a national process that is geared to address the

issues of exclusion and marginalisation in our society. I am required to ensure that there is an environment where people feel a sense of belonging. I have to ensure that through our programmes and projects, scope is created for citizens to be included in these processes, that they participate in initiatives at the local and national levels. Our interventions would be geared so that as a nation we are reprogrammed to respect and value the contribution of each other, regardless of our diversities, whether these are based on culture, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age or geographic location, as none of these things should be used as justifications for marginalising us. [**Mr. Dharamlall:** What about the gays?] We are going to take care of you, Sir.

On that score, let me caution my dear friend, Hon. Member Mr. Cornel Damon, that if we are to progress as a nation, let us see ourselves as Guyanese, even though we may belong to different race groups. We have to move together as one. It will be nice if we, as Members of this National Assembly, lead by example, by being the agents of this change. Members of this honourable House, it was Christian Larsen, who spoke of social cohesion "as a belief held by citizens of a given nation-state, that they share a moral community which enables them to trust each other".

Ladies and gentlemen, our diversities as well as experiences of our colonial past have caused some fractures in relations and mistrust among us.

2.27 p.m.

We cannot dispute this, however, we cannot continue in disunity, disharmony and division. We will work towards cohesion. My Ministry would complement the work of other ministries, civil society, Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), the differently-abled, the business community workers and employers and bodies working toward the achievement of social cohesion.

The work of this Ministry will be hard and long, despite the opinion expressed by the Hon. Member Mrs. Chandarpal that social cohesion would not come out of the Ministry, but through Commissions. Let me say to you Hon. Member that, we need everyone to be involved, to make social cohesion work. Let me also say that this Minister, this Ministry and this Government will not go down the road of vengeance. We believe in law and order. Let me say, at this point in time, if we commit a crime, then we will have to do the time.

With the allocations for the Ministry of Social Cohesion, I will now turn to the programme of the Ministry of Social Cohesion. This Budget would support the initiatives of the Ministry of Social Cohesion to develop policies, programmatic and operational frameworks, as well as to initiate strategic actions. These actions include, capacity building and development of strategic partnerships for pursuing a social cohesion agenda in 2016.

Our budgetary allocations would allow us to work with communities across the regions of Guyana, giving opportunities for citizens to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper. That willingness to cooperate means that they freely choose from partnerships and have a reasonable chance of achieving goals. This willingness to cooperate and share the fruits of their endeavours equitably is the paradigm shift that the Ministry would work to create.

Therefore, the passage of the Budget would allow the Ministry to continue laying the foundation for building and sustaining the momentum that would foster longer-term social programming. As such, it would allow us to:

- Undertake further meetings and consultations with communities in all 10 administrative regions; convening national sensitisation and networking meetings with strategic stakeholder groups;

- Information sharing and coordinating meetings with key State and governance stakeholders, such as, ministries, the regional administrations, municipalities and other related entities.

Let me take a moment Sir, to congratulate the Private Sector Commission (PSC) for the optimistic approach taken by that body on this Budget, as well as express gratitude for its implicit confidence in this Government

My Ministry would undertake training and capacity building for social cohesion programming and management — training of trainers' initiatives; training of core of Government officials in key ministries; training of staff in regional administrations, municipalities and selected Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs); and mediation, conflict resolution and peace building initiatives would be undertaken in our communities

Allocation from this Budget to my Ministry would assist to achieve the objective of formulating and implementing a strategic framework for more effective advocacy, strategic communications

and outreach programmes on social cohesion. It would allow us to prepare and disseminate advocacy and strategic communication products, such as, brochures, posters, factsheets and information on social cohesion and related issues. It would allow my Ministry to establish working and inter-sectoral relations with counterparts in several other Ministries.

The outcome would be that the work and outputs of the Ministry of Social Cohesion would be more effectively communicated to national stakeholders. The general public would be better acquainted with social cohesion programmes and actions, and understand their roles in the process of fostering enough and enabling cohesion in Guyana. That would dispel the myths propagated by the sceptics about the focus of the Ministry and assist stakeholders to understand our mandate and their own roles in contributing to the furtherance of social cohesion in this our native land.

It would be remiss of me, if I do not chronicle the Ministry's journey and accomplishments over the past eight months.

The eight-month journey of the Ministry of Social Cohesion has been very promising. To date, there are outstanding achievements and we have only just begun. This Budget will assist us to consolidate the gains already made and expand our programmes and projects.

International bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and the British High Commission (BHC) have reached out to the Ministry in support of our thrust to foster social cohesion. They have provided financial and technical support to the Ministry, particularly as it related to the holding of the Social Cohesion Round Table, held last September. We have drawn from the Round Table, key inputs for the development of the Ministry's Strategic Plan. The development of that document has commenced.

Others have indicated their interest and have begun partnering with the Ministry, and this includes, the Institute of Applied Science and Technology (IAST). They are partnering with the Ministry in assisting to foster social cohesion and expanding micro-enterprise initiatives in the regions of Guyana and is emerging as one of our good practices. With support from IAST, the soap making project in North Rupununi, Region 9, has been gaining momentum.

We have also assisted the community to expand their multiple uses of peanuts in Aranaputa and Parishara, and this will continue to expand. At Parishara, we have been able to refurbish the mill and the entire building of that peanut factory

The Ministry has been in the forefront in providing support for every child to be able to attend school regularly and punctually. We believe in the development of Guyana's human resource capital. I submit that there is a correlation between one's level of education, their inclusion and participation in development processes, and their opportunities for upward mobility.

The argument therefore is that, if the Ministry of Social Cohesion can contribute to enabling a child to attend school regularly and punctually, it is potentially making a significant contribution and investment in his/her personal development, the development of his/her community, and national development. By extension we would be making a contribution to sustainable development.

Regardless of what has been said, the truth is that the Ministry of Social Cohesion has partnered with Guyana's business community and to date, over 300 bicycles have been distributed in Regions 1, 3,4,6,7 and 9, to children who live long distances away from school.

With respect to boats - six have been distributed in Region 2, in the Upper and Lower Pomeroon; Maraikobai in Region 5; Barakara in the Canje River; and in the Berbice and Demerara Rivers. The boats are outfitted in green and yellow.

Regarding buses - the Ministry and the business community partnership has led to the acquisition of six buses to date and these have been earmarked to service Regions 4, 5, 6 and 7.

2.42 p.m.

Let me say to the Hon. Member, Dr. Vindhya Persaud, on the question of distribution of the boats, buses, and bicycles, that the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) will not be daunted by your accusations of our distribution centres. If you really knew where those items were distributed then you will be put to shame. Sorry if your supporters are gravitating to us. On the question of vengeance, all I will say, like I said a little earlier, Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, if you do the crime you will have to pay the time.

Secondly, last night, the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, referred to our contributors as political investors. I want to assure the Hon. Member that these contributors are good corporate citizens who have confidence in this APNU/AFC Government. Sorry if you did not have it in your time, but I am sure it is only that they did not have confidence in you.

Mr. Speaker, you would observe that, from these interventions with the inputs from the business community, we have made inputs with the 3B's Programme in most of the regions. I assure you that, as time unfolds the Ministry of Social Cohesion and this APNU/AFC Government will give the Guyanese people the 'good life' they are looking for. We have done all of this…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have three minutes remaining.

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, may I kindly request that the Hon. Member be given an addition five minutes, in accordance with the schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Ms. Ally: We have done all of this in a mere eight months. Let me say that this is just a tip of the iceberg. We will continue these partnerships and give children opportunities to attend school.

In concluding, it was Mahatma Gandhi who said that:

> "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."

That will is what drives this side of the House. It is the will to unite; to live in harmony; to offer each Guyanese an upward mobility; and the 'good life'. I urge those on the other side of the House to lay the differences aside…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, let us use the correct references to the Hon. Members opposite. Please proceed.

Ms. Ally: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I urge those Hon. Members on the other side of the House to lay their differences aside, let us put our hands to the plough, and according to Valarie Rodway's song:

> "Pledge every effort, cherish this earth, and make here a paradise, land of our birth."

Let me finally conclude by endorsing Budget 2016, and call on all Guyanese, including the Opposition, to work with the Ministry of Social Cohesion and let us give ourselves and all of Guyana what we deserve, a 'good life'.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Bishop Edghill: On a Point of Order. I rise under Standing Order 40 (b) and I wish to indicate that at no time did I refer to the donors as political investors. I am referring to the statement made by the Hon. Member. I asked a question: How many of the donors are contractors engaged with the State? And, are they also political investors?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for that explanation.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: As I stand to contribute to the 2016 Budget debate, I want to acknowledge the effort by the Minister of Finance and his team from the Ministry of Finance for presenting to this House the 2016 Budget. The budget document on page 18, paragraph 10 states:

> "Substantial financial provision has been made to promote the preservation of indigenous culture, identity, social integration, economic prosperity, physical infrastructure, green energy, sustainable development, and the protection of indigenous lands."

These broad categories outlined in the 2016 Budget Speech, simply reword the People's Progressive Party/Civic's (PPP/C) legacy of success in the areas of lands rights for Amerindians, the economic transformation of the village economies, the challenging social issues faced by hinterland and Amerindian residents, the successes in the expanding of physical and productive infrastructure in the villages, and a successful cultural environment with expanding and increasing recognition of the rich diversity and culture of the Indigenous peoples.

I took some time to examine the Budget to see what financial resources were available to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and I discovered that, for the current budget, $776,533,000 was allocated. Then, I looked at the capital budget - the capital budget is what offers direct intervention and directly affects people's lives. I noted that for the capital expenditure a mere $1,407,000,000 was allocated. What does this amount to? This amounts to a mere 0.05% of a budget of $230 billion. [**Members of the Opposition:** Shame.] It is a shame because the Budget Speech also recognised and, in the words that I want to put it, it

boasted of the hinterland being home to our Indigenous peoples spread across the three quarters of our national land mask and recognising the inequity that exist. Yet the Budget allocates the least to the most challenged segment of our population.

This is unfair. It is unfair to the extent that the capital budget merely offers support to three areas that will actually have some impact on the lives of Indigenous people. I want to deal with these three areas of impact.

I would like say that for the first one, just close to $1 billion is going to be spent on a youth project. This project is a replacement project to what obtained before 10th May, 2015; a project which supported Indigenous youths; a project under the name of the Youth Entrepreneurial and Apprenticeship Project, which engaged 1,972 young Amerindians. The engagement of these youths was in activities that provided support to community development, while attaining experience in various fields like education, health, village administration, regional administration, and to a lesser extent, to engagement with the sectors of forestry, mining, and of course the maintenance of village assets.

It is appalling to know that, as soon as the coalition Government obtained or got into office, and of course under questionable circumstances, they dismantled this innovative project geared towards supporting Indigenous youths. I would like to quote from a statement made in this House by the Vice-President and Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, the Hon. Sydney Allicock:

> "Towards this end, with effect from 1st September, 2015, YEAP will be replaced by the Hinterland Employment and Youth Services. All former CSO will be eligible to be enlisted for training to receive relevant skills, so as to enable them to earn an income in the pursuit of suitable livelihood and a means to enjoying the good life. Under the new initiative we hope to train thousands of young people while paying them a stipend."

2.57 p.m.

This project, which was declared to be implemented on 1st September, 2015, has resulted, not in Amerindian youths enjoying a 'good life'; it has resulted in Amerindian youths being less, in terms of what they obtain. They lost interest in community development and they are no longer

meaningfully engaged at the community level. If one was to calculate the loss of income, and I am only calculating from May 2015 to January of this year, they have lost $473,280,000. [**Ms. Ally:** Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai, you had stopped paying the people since April, 2015. What are you coming with now?] I am speaking of May to January. For the information of this House, a Supplemental was brought to this House to pay the CSOs, which we supported.

I wish to say, the loss of meaningful engagements of the youths from Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 did not only directly affected 1,972 individuals, it affected approximately 12,000 family members. It also contributed to the collapse of the very growing entrepreneurial spirit in those villages. It caused the collapse of businesses in those villages because, annually, that project contributed to almost $1 billion circulating in Indigenous communities across the hinterland.

As I listen to the Hon. Minister within the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, on Tuesday, when the Hon. Member was presenting her presentation on the Budget, the Hon. Minister noted that these 1,972 young people were not genuine youths. She said that they were PPP politicians. This is grave insult to young Amerindian youths. Why is it a grave insults to Amerindians youths? Because her comment infringed on the rights of Indigenous youths to make a free political choice, just in the event that, indeed, they were PPP politicians.

Secondly, disbanding the YEAP Project and the sloth with which they have moved, not to replace it is also infringing on the economic rights and opportunities of young Indigenous people. This is a classic example of paid back time for the Amerindian electorate. Because in the 11th May, 2015 Elections, the Amerindians voted overwhelmingly for the People Progressive Party/Civic Government, and to pay them back with the denial of engagement in their community and taking away their income, does not allow them to enjoy the 'good life'. In fact, it is a discrimination not to support young Amerindians, when they are engaged meaningfully in activities that could enhance their skills and capacities. It is discrimination against the Indigenous youths to deny them income for service to their community. It is discrimination and discriminatory to punish young Amerindians and their families on the assumption that they are politically aligned. This goes against all international norms and laws as it relates to Indigenous people.

I want to say that it is criminal and an infringement of Indigenous peoples' economic right. I wish to underscore that and I would wish that the Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs would tell this House, today when he speaks, why is it that from 1st September, 2015 to 31st January, 2016, he has not been able to roll out the Hinterland Employment Youth Service (HEYS) Project to benefit Amerindians. What is keeping him back? He is in his seat; he has great power and authority to stand up and represent his people; the authority is in his hands.

It is in his hands to ensure that, as a Ministry with the portfolio responsible for assisting young people, and in fact, I am reminded that he is Vice-President of this nation, he must track; he must be able to monitor; and he must be to ensure that his portfolio and the responsibility matches the salary that he takes home.

Taking $1 billion away from the Indigenous community matches the increase that the coalition Government provided with the increase salaries for themselves. [***Interruption***]

The Budget also spoke about support for Indigenous education, and they afforded the words and it is recorded in the Budget Speech that, in this year, they would provide moneys to design a facility to support Indigenous youths to access higher learning. [**Mr. Patterson:** What is wrong with that?] Nothing is wrong with that, but I want to ensure that the Indigenous people and the nation understand that this project is also one which is coming late. It is late because, in 2015, just before the prorogation of this Parliament, the Cabinet approved for the design and the construction of this facility to assist Indigenous youth with cheap, adequate and affordable accommodation.

The Government brought Budget 2015 and it boasts of two budgets in less than a year, but in the first Budget they fail to include that very critical project to support the Indigenous youth development. In the 2016 Budget, I wish for the Minister to explain to this House, why is it that he sat back and allowed only an allocation for the design of the building. One year to design a facility, is that how you measure your performance?

When we built the Liliendaal Student Dorm, we dealt with design and construction in a single year. Delaying the construction of this critical facility will only delay the opportunities of young Indigenous people to access higher learning opportunities. Parents of current students who are going to the University of Guyana and other technical institutions in Georgetown are always

concerned. I was told that on some trips into the interior these matters were raised. I want to ask the Minister, what propelled him to finally bring this project in 2016, and what did he not see right in also asking the Ministry of Finance to provide funding for construction? Answer that. The delay that the Hon. Minister continues to have in his Ministry is not impacting positively on the well-being for a 'good life' for Indigenous people.

The Budget also makes mention of how this coalition Government is going to support 450 scholarship students. I want to remind this House and the nation that this project was established in the late and early 1960s by the People Progressive Party/Civic. I am happy that this programme still continues up to today, providing support to Indigenous students. But, what I am not happy about is the fact that parents have been asking last year for an increase for the students' stipends. They made representation and I am representing them here in this Parliament. They need an increase. Since the Government, when they got into office, disbanded the "We Care Project" and denied the $10,000 per child per year, it also affected the Indigenous students who are on regional and national scholarships. I am asking the Minister to seek an audience with the Minister of Finance and ask the Minister of Finance whether it is not too late to increase the $4,000 to $10,000 per month.

Why should Indigenous people always have to be fighting and challenging the Comrades, Ministers and the Hon. Leaders on the opposite side? This had been the trend of what occurred when the People's Nation Congress (PNC) was there.

3.12 p.m.

It is now creeping in again when they have to beg, when they have to come and ask and when the fishing… The other side promised them that they are very visionary and will make their lives easy. They said that there is a good life ahead so vote for them. You need to get up and act on behalf of your people.

School uniform for children is another support which the PPP/C Government, when it was in office, afforded the Hinterland students. Later on, it became a national support. School uniforms have arrived a couple of weeks ago in Region 9, not in September; it should have been bought in July or before September and distributed by December. The Budget came late; I agree. But now,

in February, Regions 1, 7 and 8 are still awaiting uniforms. Two academic terms have passed and children have not yet received benefits from your Government.

A comment was made yesterday, during a presentation, that we have the same Community Support Officers (CSOs). Then this Government should make them work the way they worked before. I understand that they do not listen to technical people anymore; they do not listen to those who work in the fields, and the barrage of highly acclaimed unqualified experts that they have around them are misleading them. There are legal advisors. There are advisors on sports and culture. There are advisors on everything and yet they cannot do the job.

I now turn to land titling.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes remaining.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I ask for an extension of the Hon. Member's time to include the five minutes to bring her time to a total of 35 minutes. Thank you, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: Since the coalition Government and its politicians were in Opposition, they continued to mumble and continued to champion, as they said, land rights for Amerindians. Even in the Budget, it states that moneys are in the Budget and that land protection for Indigenous peoples will be dealt with.

I want to let this House know that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government, between the years of 2012 and 2013, secured adequate funding to deal with this matter. The Hon. Vice-President, Sydney Allicock, sat on the Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC) and he had every single detail and information relating to this matter. What obtained since he got in, since they are so efficient more than the PPP/C Government? I will tell you what happened.

To date, they have not yet titled any village since they have been there. They have not dealt with the extension applications that were applied for by Indigenous peoples. They have not produced any new demarcation for Amerindian lands. It is nine months into their term. Yesterday, I saw a copy of the Manifesto of the coalition Government, and, in that Manifesto, there are seven

paragraphs expounding international bonds and rights about land and protecting Amerindians. Today, they have not yet done anything as it relates to land.

I call on the Minister to prioritise projects that will bring greater benefits to Amerindians and desist from sitting for long hours and months to deal with systems. Approve the title for Kangaruma; approve the title for Tasserine; approve the title for Sawaraowai; approve the title for Eclipse Falls and approve the title for Parabarawau. I ask the Minister to do these things in the one year that he has. It seems as though the Hon. Minister and his company have abandoned the Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) Project and the partnership we have with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on these matters. They have totally abandoned ship.

I also wish to ask the Minister, if it is not too complicated for him, to cooperate with the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) to deal with the Kangaruma and Tasserine mining claims that were approved after 2013. The Minister should sit and negotiate because the Indigenous peoples noted, in the report, that these matters were critical and key to their ownership. The title of Kangaruma and Tasserine should be provided to them this year. The investigation is over; the review was done and there is nothing keeping them back with the exception of claims that were approved after 2013. In fact, let me tell this House that, in 2012, titles were prepared for those communities and the wickedness that occurred in the mining sector disallowed Tasserine and Kangaruma from owning land now. I call upon you; you are sitting there; do not allow the title issue to go unanswered.

I also call on the Government to provide titles to Rockstone. The matter of Rockstone has had extensive discussions, so much so that so many compromises were made. Finally, the Amerindians, who are not greedy people, have agreed that, within a one square mile on the main road, anyone with legal and formal leases to their lands will be excised out. The Amerindian Act allows for that and yet the Rockstone title is being delayed. Give the lands to the Amerindians.

Work was done on extension application. I want to expend my time talking about extension. Please give Mainstay, Mashabo, Bethany, Capoey, Wakapau, Akawini, Saint Monica, Sand Creek, Potarinau and Mokomoko their extensions. Investigation reports are on your desk and you are entrusted in ensuring that they get their lands.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have four minutes remaining.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: I will go off land because these matters are public and it is important for the nation to know. But, I want to say that the Amerindian Development Fund (ADF)…the PPP/C Government secured more than US$6.4 million to generate economic activities to stimulate village economy and to transform the way of production in those villages. Up to now, not a cent was spent from this money since they assumed office. I can read, in last year, the first quarter, how many villages accessed funds from the ADF for their micro projects.

Today, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs was able to accomplish only two things: a meeting with the North Rupununi Development Board to control the funding for 16 Amerindian communities in that location…that comes from ADF. They do not want the communities to manage singly by themselves…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have two minutes remaining.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: They want the North Rupununi Development Board to be the implementer of these projects for the 16 communities. Every time anyone from the coalition talks about the Interior, one hears about Annai, Surama, North Rupununi Board and Bina Hill. The Indigenous community is expansive; it goes beyond that area. It goes into Region 7, Region 9 and Region 1. The bigger things for everyone must be focussed on and not for one selected area because the Hon. Vice-President, Sydney Allicock, comes from there. The Government needs to stop focussing on the small things like the Bs. There has been no new initiative to compliment these big ticket projects left by the PPP/C Government - shame. There is no big ticket project to complement the foundation that the Vice-President inherited. Do you know what this Government's big ticket project is? It is 300 bicycles, some expandable slippers and boots.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Mr. Williams: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this 2016 Budget and to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Da Costa Jordan, and his team for the preparation and presentation of a well drafted Budget, a budget so transformative that it will engender a new ethos, indeed a renaissance. I congratulate him.

It is unprecedented, in the annals of our Parliament, that a budget was presented within five months of the previous Budget and also in the month of January.

3.27 p.m.

This is a clear indication of this Government's commitment to stimulating growth and strengthening the confidence of the Guyanese people as a good life beckons.

Before I delve into my remit, I must observe that no Member on the other side, surely not the lawyers who have all spoken, have seen it fit to raise any substantial or meaningful issue that concerns me. I do not know if I should be disappointed that they have not engaged me or if I should be pleased that they have recognised how successfully I have done what I was required to do in the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Office of the Attorney General. All the lawyers have spoken, as I have said. The Hon. Mr. Bulkan would determine who else would want to speak on the law on that side.

I have listened to the protestations, on the other side, by my Hon. Friends and they have been bizarre - most of them - but I just want to disabuse the mind of the Hon. Member, Pauline Campbell-Sukhai. The Amerindian Youth Programme had, in fact, come to an end before we took office in May, after the glorious victory on Monday, 11th May, 2015. It meant that we inherited over 2,000 unemployed youths in Amerindian communities. Even when they were employed under the last Government, they deployed them to do political work for them in the Hinterland community. Fortunately for the Indigenous youths, this Government, the APNU/AFC Government, has taken them in under the Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training Programme and we have them in training so that they could develop skills that they could deploy in making themselves useful citizens of this country.

The Hon. Member also spoke about title and she asked why we did not, in eight months, give the Amerindian communities titles to their lands. So the question must be asked: why did the last Government, in 23 years, not give it to them? The Amerindian peoples must ask them that.

My Hon. Friends, on the other side, have even blamed us for recording the lowest economic growth in 2015, in a decade. I do not know if their memories fail them. We were in office for a couple of months in 2015 because they kept out of this honourable House for well over 11 months in 2015 and it is to our credit that we have a country that is still viable and up and running. They believe people's memories are short, but people's memories are not short. That is why they are seated on that side of the House.

The Hon. Member from the Guyana Rice Producers Association (GRPA), Mr. Seeraj, accused us of making promises to brainwash and bamboozle the Guyanese people to get power and that we were unconcerned about how unrealistic the promises are. I wish to address that, Mr. Speaker. The development of bringing two Budgets within a short space of time has this challenge. [**Mr. Nandlall:** Is that a development? That is a coincidence of [*inaudible*]] [*Laughter*] I know this would have happened and so, in ruminating on what should be my approach, I decided that I would enquire of you, Sir, in terms of dealing with the noise levels on the other side, whether I should seek your protection or whether I should employ self-help. I will be guided by you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, this development brings this challenge: the promises made in the first Budget by this Government, in 2015, had only a five-month window to be delivered upon and not the normal 12 months that one would expect.

Nonetheless, this Government, our Government, strove manfully to execute its mandates and, in the case of the Attorney General's Chambers and the Ministry of Legal Affairs (AGMLA), we were able to deliver on the promises that we made in the last Budget presentation in this House: Housing the Commercial and Land Registries in new premises; and appointments of Registrar and Deputy Registrar to head the Commercial Registry. We are, nonetheless, labouring under this weight that those premises were acquired for over $550 million. We are labouring under that and we are going to take action on that. Continuing, we are working on: reducing the backlog in the Land Registry; widening the class of persons who can be coroners by passage of the Coroners (Amendment) Bill 2015 into law to facilitate inquests and inquiries into hundreds of unsolved and unnatural deaths under the watch of the last Government. Another promise that we delivered on is that we passed the law to create a permanent Law Reform Commission.

Also, we honoured the financial independent status of the constitutional bodies by passing, in this House, budgets initiated by those newly freed entities. Further, we created a draft Bill on cybercrime, which has been sent to stakeholders for consideration and feedback before passage through this honourable House. Importantly, we began payments on the judgment sum to Rudisa, which was left unpaid by the last Government. That is only one because the last Government, if they gifted us anything, were some hefty judgments under their watch. We also have another $5 billion debt to deal with that was accumulated under the watch of the last Government and the last Attorney General of this country. That is what we have to do. Those are the promises that

they have burdened us with. On the passage of this Budget, the final payment to Rudisa will be made. The sums are so hefty that, as a poor nation – they left us with a poor country - we are unable to pay these fantastic judgments in one walk. We have to try and see if we could spread it over time. That case was done by the Hon. Member, Mr. Anil Nandlall.

I do not know what type of Chambers the last Government had as an Attorney General's Chambers, but they always seemed to be losing cases that attracted some hefty judgements. Only last week, the Minister of Finance lamented to me that he also was served with a judgment for $400 million from Dipcon Engineering Services Ltd., so it is just to show that we have to examine the conduct of the Hon. Members on the other side that could have led to these outrageous sums being awarded against the Guyanese people in this country.

According to the English Philosopher, Thomas Hobbs:

> "Law is the formal glue that holds fundamentally disorganised societies together."

Legal Scholar and Author Glanville Williams described the law as:

> "…the cement of society and also an essential medium of change."

Jurist Joseph P. Bradley opined:

> "Society cannot exist without law. Law is the bond of society: that which makes it, that which preserves it and keeps it together. It is, in fact, the essence of civil society."

This APNU/AFC Government will reassert the rule of law in this country of Guyana. [**Ms. Teixeira:** [*inaudible*] a few minutes ago.] I am not in a position to deal with any grazing at this time. I will ask Mr. Bulkan to assist me.

In keeping with the aforementioned precept, the Drafting Division of the Attorney General's Chambers is a great division. We need to pay the members of the Attorney General's Chambers better wages and salaries. They have prepared a number of legislation, including the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2015 - Bill No. 15 of 2015 and the Anti-Terrorism and Terrorist Related Activities Bill 2015 - Bill. No.16 of 2015 which criminalises terrorism in its various forms and provides for the detection, prevention, prosecution and punishment of persons involved in terrorist activities in and outside of Guyana.

The Division has prepared legislation to give effect to the legislative agenda of the Government for 2016 to provide for greater benefits for the welfare and upliftment of our people; in other words, it is for the good life.

The AGMLA will continue to be proactive and include the relevant stakeholders in the creation of legislation before passage through this House. In the exceptional case of complex legislation, we will seek recourse to the device of the Special Select Committee.

The Attorney General's Chambers has also implemented a system of publishing draft Bills on its website, inviting stakeholders to send in their comments and views to the Chambers. These Bills include the Cybercrime Bill, the Protective Disclosure (Whistle Blower) Bill, the Witness Protection Bill and the Insurance Bill.

The Office of the Attorney General is the arm of the Government responsible for providing legal services to the Government and its various agencies. The Attorney General acts as guardian of the public interest to ensure that the rights of all Guyanese are protected and to represent the State in civil proceedings in the name of the Attorney General. To this end, the Government of Guyana is collaborating with the Canadian Government - and it is apposite that we have visitors from the Canadian Parliament with us, the High Commissioner also, who is well known to us.

3.42 p.m.

We are collaborating with the Canadian Government to strengthen the criminal justice system in Guyana. The Canadian Government has allocated the sum of $110 million, of which the sum of $75 million will be utilised in 2016. The Justice Education Society (JES) of British Columbia is the executing agency of the grant and has conducted the following training programmes with the various state agencies.

Two-day roundtable with the Guyana Police Force's (GPF) senior management in October, 2015: The Commissioner of Police and all the senior ranking officers participated in presentations and discussions on how major case management could improve the investigations of serious criminal cases.

Twenty-two investigators from the GPF completed a seven-day course in Major Case Management and Investigation. The course involved lectures, demonstrations and practical exercises in a variety of investigation techniques used in serious criminal matters in Canada.

Six analysts completed a ten-day intensive training course in Forensic Video Analysis. This is very important for Guyana. The training and equipment provide solutions for collection, processing and managing of all forms of multimedia evidence, including video, still images and audio from private and Government's Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras.

Five-day crime scene management training for crime scene technicians and for investigators: This training focused on best practices in crime scene management, how to prepare for court and practical exercises for processing major crimes and preparing forensic experts for court.

A two-day training for police officers who have been selected to become trainers in the JES activities was also conducted in January, 2016.

During the period 4th to 15th January, 2016, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and prosecutors from the Guyana Police Force were trained in trial advocacy skills. JES trained in major case management and provided on-the-job coaching. JES also trained them in crime scene investigation and provided on-the-job coaching. JES trained the analysts from the GPF and will provide on-the-job coaching on cases and JES will also organise a diagnostic on the backlog in criminal cases in the Magistrate's Court. This collaboration will continue in June, 2016, with the training involving magistrates and judges.

Supreme Court of Judicature

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the Supreme Court of Judicature, as you might know, the Family Court infrastructure was something that had bedevilled the last Government and it had practically been promising, over two Parliaments, to establish the Family Court. The Family Court Rules have been comprehensively revised and have been submitted to the National Assembly. The infrastructure is complete. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has provided assistance with the furnishing and the training of judges, lawyers and support staff for the Family Court. So, under the APNU/AFC Government, the Family Court will be realised in Guyana.

The final revision of the Rules of the High Court has been undertaken by a consultant retained by the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) under the Canadian funded Jurist Project. This revision should be finalised by March, 2016 and implementation will, thereafter, follow.

Work has commenced on the extension of the High Court, which will provide accommodation for the Land Court, additional courtrooms and a case management centre and additional library space.

I take personal pride in getting these projects off the ground because, when we came into office, all these projects were supposed to have been effected by protest bids for well over two years and, upon inquiry, investigation and the application of some turpentine, one sees mud is very high in the compound of the Supreme Court and the Magistrate's Court in Sparendaam has already started… In Sparendaam, two courtrooms will be constructed and a brand new court building. The Lethem Magistrate's Court was declared open in 2015 and is now functional.

Land Registry

The Land Registry is now located centrally and has made tremendous strides in removing years of debilitating slothfulness under the last Government. The new Registrar and her team are to be commended because, in August 2015, when she assumed governance of that Land Registry, there was a national outcry, not only by lawyers, but by the citizenry, as to the state of that Land Registry. When this Government's team got into that place, this is what they met: a backlog in private transfers, both in Berbice and Georgetown, of well over 3,500 cases; Ministry of Housing transfers - well over 5,000; mutilated and lost titles - over 335; mortgages - well over 650.

What is the present situation? The present situation is that the backlog in private transfers has been reduced by 2,500; the Ministry of Housing's transfers by 1,600; mutilated lost titles by 275 and mortgages by 640. I think that that Registrar and her team deserve a very great round of applause.

In 2016, the Land Registry will embark on capacity building aimed at ensuring that all staff are equipped to discharge their duties efficiently; the Land Registry's service in Essequibo will resume and the records of land holding in land registration areas will be restored and preserved.

Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT)

This Government continues to show political commitment to removing this country from the clutches of the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism censoring regime process that the last Government placed it in. This fact is confirmed by the latest "Progress Report" of the Americas Regional Review Group (ARRG) which is to be presented to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Plenary in Paris, France, 16th to 19th February, 2016. At page 81 of its Report, the ARRG has detailed all the work that this new Government has done since taking office:

> "The main development in Guyana is the enactment of the AML/CFT (Amendment) Act 2015 which became enforceable on 10th July, 2015. The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) has also issued guidance on targeted financial sanctions and a money laundering typology report on the gold jewellery trade in August, 2015. The AML/CFT regulations 2015 were laid in the National Assembly on 17th August, 2015 subject to negative resolution and are enforceable. The AML/CFT (Amendment) (No.2) Act 2015 was enacted on 17th December, 2015 and became enforceable on 6th January, 2016. The AML/CFT (Amendment) Regulation No.7 of 2015 was laid in the National Assembly on 17th December, 2015 subject to negative resolution and is enforceable. The FIU issued guidelines on targeted financial sanctions on 21st December, 2015."

In its conclusion, the Americas Regional Review Group stated this:

> "The enactment of the AML/CFT (Amendment) Act 2015 and the AML/CFT (Amendment) (No.2) Act 2015 has implemented a substantial number of action items. Guyana continues to demonstrate its commitment to comply with the action plan and is to be commended for having met most of the deadlines."

Nothing was done from 2000 until 11th May, 2015. The employment of the contract of the former head of the Financial Intelligence Unit recently expired, thereby occasioning a temporary vacancy in that position. That vacancy is in the process of being filled, pursuant to the new provisions of the AML/CFT (Amendment) Act 2015, by the Committee on Appointments of the Parliament.

Commercial Registry

The Commercial Registry, having moved into its new premises, is confidently seeking to build its capacity to give speedy and efficient service to the Guyanese people. The Registry is 80% digitised. The digitisation of companies, businesses and trademarks was completed in 2009.

The Auditor General's Report shows that only 38% of trademark certificates are issued annually. This backlog has persisted in excess of 20 years…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have four minutes more.

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Trotman]: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask that the Hon. Member be given five extra minutes to conclude his speech, as has been agreed.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This backlog has persisted in excess of 20 years. A trademark is issued four years after application. Presently, the Intellectual Property Automation System JAVA is being used to reduce this backlog by enabling searches, examination and the generation of certificates for trademarks. By June, 2016, trademark certificates will be issued three months after application once all statutory requirements are met by the agents. I must congratulate the Commercial Registry for this.

Patents filed since 2003 are now being advertised in the *Official Gazette* and, subsequently, certificates issued. Companies' certificates of incorporation and business registrations are now being issued within four days of application. Again, congratulations to the Commercial Registry.

The Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs Action Plan for 2016

Through the leadership of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, a Hague Conference will be held in Guyana in partnership with UNICEF Guyana and the Hague Conference on Private International Law. The theme of the Conference is: *International Family Law, Legal Cooperation and Commerce, Promoting Human Rights and Cross-Border Trade in Guyana through the Hague Convention*.

The sum of $16 million has been allocated for the hosting of the Conference in July this year and UNICEF has already made a substantial contribution to this.

The new Justice Sector Programme, which is designed to consolidate improvements in the justice sector, is a collaboration between the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Government of Guyana. The following funds are allocated in relation to the respective components.

Setting up a law revision office and undertaking a revision of our laws to update them to 2015: The sum of US$182,000,260 has been allocated for that.

Setting up a permanent law reform commission with a secretariat for the purpose of continuously examining our laws and making recommendations on areas of reform: US$504,000,150 has been earmarked for this.

Training for judges, magistrates and prosecutors, including writing of decisions, sentencing, *et cetera*: US$42,150.

Disposal of backlog cases by measures, including the appointment of part-time judges to deal with the civil backlog within a specified time frame: US$49,020.

The introduction of voice recognition systems for recording evidence in the criminal sections in the High Courts of Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo and Magistrate's Courts hearing serious offences to enhance and speed up trials: US$327,000.

The introduction of cybercrime legislation and a regime to train investigators, prosecutors, magistrates and judges to understand the nature of these emerging crimes: US$58,200.

Provision of funding has also been made for the acquisition of Caribbean Law (CARILAW) and LexisNexis legal research database programmes. The country will hear more about LexisNexis and purchasing of books for the Attorney General's Chambers at a later date.

3.57 p.m.

In light of these premises, the majority of the Guyanese people will, like the Phoenix, rise again from the ashes of their own despair as A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government stimulates growth, strengthens their confidence, as "the good life beckons."

I thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think this is a good time to take the suspension. I wish to remind Members of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply that we should meet. I invite you to join me in my chambers to treat with matters. Members we will meet immediately after we rise.

Sitting suspended at 3.59 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.12 p.m.

Ms. Manickchand: We are here for Budget 2016. Before I begin I wish to congratulate warmly the Hon. Minister of Finance and his staff, and the staff of all the Ministries, who would have had to work a bit harder to get us two budgets in six months. I wish to offer them warm congratulations. I am aware that many of them will leave this room disappointed, because they did not get what they wanted, and astounded because of what they see in the budget. Nevertheless, we are grateful for their tireless efforts, over and over again.

This is about nine months since the new Government is in place. It is enough time, I believe, being on the jobs daily - certainly they believe so, given that they have paid themselves handsomely - to understand fully what is happening in the country. It is enough time to be able to garner where we are, where we were, where we want to go and how to get us there. This is the budget that could characterise this particular new Government.

I think it is my duty to note, for this honourable House, what many of us in here already know. This period has been characterised by disappointment and sadness, by heavy heartedness, by dissolution, and by lost opportunities - the lost opportunity to fulfil promises so passionately made just nine months ago; lost opportunity to treat teachers the way you told them that they should be treated, giving them massive increases; lost opportunity to fulfil promises such as massive increases in the old age pensions; lost opportunity to really show how a country could go forward using the best talent, irrespective of how people voted; lost opportunity to show youths that they matter in decision making. We only have to look across from us to understand how very distrusted the young people of this country are. We read in the budget that young

people are not prepared for leadership. This has caused great disappointment in this land and that is unfortunate.

Dr. Henry Jeffrey, commenting in the *Stabroek News*, a former Member of this House, now lecturer and commentator in the *Stabroek News,* said that he would bet the bottom dollars that a substantial number of those who wanted to see the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) out of government and supported the coalition are now extremely disappointed with the performance of the latter. As can be expected, the popular refrain would be, "*Is not we own; all yuh sen he home"*, without listening. Another characteristic of the nine months is, "*Is we time*; *we seh suh, it will be suh; we don't have to listen to anyone*."

I wish to read the words of a young prolific writer, Sara Bharrat. She titled her piece *It Is Time.* It is something that was associated with the green and yellow campaign of the APNU/AFC. Nine months ago she was a champion of change. I have to say, in fairness to her, I got the impression that she was the champion of change of the culture of our politics, where we were. I cannot read the whole piece but I invite everyone to read it. This is what she said:

"Our country is small and our people are inescapably connected. I believe that last May we began the fight to take Guyana back, to give her the sort of grooming she deserved these past 50 years."

Then she writes of her disappointment and disillusion. It is our time that is destroying our country. She concludes like this:

"They told us that it is time and they were right. It is time to see them for what they really are, to see that they were never sincere and they cannot forgive. It is time to see that hate and bitterness drive them in a power struggle that robs us, robs us of our lives and our time, things that can never be returned."

Your champion of change is reflecting the feelings of disappointment of so many in our land. You could have changed this.

Outside of that, I was looking at the budget to see what the policy framework is within which this Government is going to function. One would think that at least the manifesto promises, and

the promises made on the campaign trail, would inform what that policy would be. I have not seen anything written. I have not seen what framework is there.

When we were elected into office in 1992 we said very clearly what we wanted to do. We wanted to reduce poverty; we wanted to make democratic norms and practices the order of the day rather than something to long for; we wanted to make sure that all our people could benefit from the goods of our land. I could go through all our policies on education, making access to education expanded, housing the population, providing better health services. Everything that was built up over the years can be marked by the indicator of the World Bank.

In 1991 the World Bank did a study on poverty here and reported that in or around 61% of our people were living in poverty. That was out of every 100 persons. [**Mr. Williams:** Which year?] It was in 1991 under the People's National Congress (PNC) Government, the party that makes up most of the APNU/AFC Government. It did a study on us again in 2008 and reported that Guyana had reduced poverty to 35%, had cut poverty in half. We saw there was a policy focus, a framework, all our programmes were done within this framework and here is the indicator. It was almost ten years ago. I am absolutely sure this new Government took over a better reduction in the poverty levels.

In the absence of something clear, about what policy this Government is pursuing, we are left with the measures in this budget. What are some of them? It is a ban on the importation of cars older than eight years old which will cause at least 80% of the people who bought cars last year not to be able to afford cars this year; bans on the importation of tyres that would quadruple the cost of tyres. The category of persons who bought cars last year would not be able to buy cars this year. That means that the mothers and fathers within a particular economic bracket, 80% of who bought cars last year, had they postponed their purchase to this year, would be without transportation, and probably relying on the bikes and buses. Charging less on rum; assertions that homes would be repossessed; assertions that rice is not Government's business and is a private sector enterprise undeserving of Government assistance; $1,200 for pensioners; $800 for poor people who are receiving public assistance; million dollar salaries for their Ministers; new fees for licences; removal of the Women of a Worth (WOW) programme; removal of the Because We Care Cash Grant programme.

From what is said in the budget, and what is not said in the budget, I think we can garner what is the framework, what is the intent of this Government. It is for the Members to make themselves comfortable, to live life large, while they neglect the persons who depend on them for service. I think we can get a good summation of what the budget is. It came from no lesser a person than the Hon. Member of the Government Mr. Audwin Rutherford when he said that this is not a poor people budget. He said that. If we were confused then, we heard from the other side, from almost every speaker in the back bench, this inane repetition of nothing happen under the previous Government and that this budget was a "fresh approach". I understand why Hon. Member Mr. Jaipaul Sharma was confused. How could it be a "fresh approach"? How could nothing have happened if there were so many programmes?

Let us take education sector. Everything here was a repetition of what we had two years ago. That is not fresh. We announced in this House, two years ago, that we negotiated the money for many of the programmes that you are now calling fresh. How could it be that there was nothing in the budget? Having taken almost, wholesale from the last budget, from the PPP/C's programmes, all that is now in education, the budget for education is easy to support. Of course, we have complaints about the things that were left out. What we have a quarrel with is that the PPP/C programmes were not taken holistically. There will always be problems when a piece is plagiarised and a piece is left out.

5.23 p.m.

At school you are cautioned not to copy because you could copy wrong. There are the nice fancy schools that I will talk about just now. There are the nice fancy schools for our children and there is the training of teachers and there is the improvement of our literacy and numeracy standards. We are giving our children what the PPP/C wanted to give them as far as education is concerned, but by some of these measures we have removed from their parents the ability to look after those children.

You took out education programme and you are going to build a school, but you took away from the parents, of all those 1,700 children, from the Wales Sugar Estate, the ability to put breakfast on the table before they go to school. You are taking away from the single parents, who were relying on WOW,...What is WOW? WOW is a loan that was being given to single parents at a

low interest rate without the requirement for collateral. We were recognised by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for this programme. You are taking away… I am hearing the moronic refrain…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you did not say that. You will withdraw it right away.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, did you hear anything?

Mr. Speaker: I heard you say the word "moronic". It is not a word to be used in this chamber. The first one was "inane", I let it pass but please we cannot keep doing this. Would you withdraw that and then proceed?

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, it was a heckle. I do not think we were paying attention to heckles, but there is an attempt to…

Mr. Trotman: I rise on a Point of Order, Sir, to say that last evening the Hon. Member and Minister of Social Protection said that the WOW programme has been restored. For a Member to stand here and say that it has been taken away, having heard that last night, would not be correct. That is a Point of Order, that it is palpably wrong to make a statement like that, having heard Minister last night.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I thank you. I await the withdrawal of the term that you ought not to have use, Hon. Member.

Ms. Manickchand: I withdraw the term, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I will ask all other Hon. Members not to indulge, however much the temptation is great, to use epithets.

Ms. Manickchand: It is such as the word "hoodwinked", Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I beg your pardon, Madam.

Ms. Manickchand: I was wondering if you do not want us to use words such as "hoodwinked". I could refrain from using the word "hoodwinked", Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms. Manickchand: We heard something mumbled as heckling in this National Assembly about how many of the loans were bagged. You do not squash a programme because you cannot manage the programme. You fix it and you manage it. The programme was always at risk because of the nature of the programme, offering collateral free loans to anyone, carries with it a risk that there will be low repayment if there is no serious monitoring. We are talking about single parent women who are trying to look after their children. Let us not get distracted from what I was saying. I was saying that you put the fact that you are going to build a school, in here, but you have taken away from parents their ability to send their children to school.

Mr. Speaker, you are saying to our rice farmers and their children that you are not going to invest in rice, rice is not Government's business and that the rice is going to be treated as a private sector enterprise. The people in this National Assembly, who are Hon. Ministers of the Government, were able to pay themselves more than twice what the other Government's people were using based on the contributions of rice farmers over the years. That is how you got the money to pay yourself. That is how we were able to take our country to this point. When there is a sector in trouble, whether for rice price, for markets, or so, the responsible thing to do is to step in and help the people of the sector. They are not asking for a million dollars a month or $1.7 million a month, but they are asking for some relief in diesel, some relief fertilisers, some guidance and they would like to see the Minister of Agriculture. A small thing such as that, they never saw him and people are wondering if the Hon. Member was ever in a rice field. These are some of the real issues that people want to talk about.

In the education sector's budget we heard that there is going to be the big ticket items for the SEIP programme, that is the Secondary Education Improvement Programme. I wish to bring to the attention of the National Assembly that in the budget debates of 2014, at paragraph 4.74, this is what Dr. Ashni Singh said:

> "Moreover we will commence implementation of a $10 million universal secondary education initiative which will facilitate the construction of new schools and provision of materials for improved teaching techniques and technology assisted learning in mathematics. Our teacher training college will continue to offer…"

In 2014 we announced this programme in the Budget 2014 and by 2016, had we been, in office we would have been coming with new things. In 2016, two years later, you come and bring as a fresh idea, and as the Minister of Finance said "a new initiative", a programme that we began in 2014. It is a stagnation budget. The items for 2014 are being brought up in 2016. What was in that programme to take us to a closer place where we could have universal secondary education? There were programmes built-in. For example, there are to be four new secondary schools, most of them with a thousand-person capacity with state-of-the-art science labs and all the works. One was supposed to be at Good Hope on the East Coast. I hope that we have not changed this in the new philosophy of paying off political investors. There was supposed to be one at Good Hope, La Parfaite Harmonie and on the highway. Those schools would have been schools that allow us to get closer to universal secondary education.

This is the good programme that the Minister boasted about, in which teachers would be trained further to deal with Mathematics, English and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematic (STEM) subjects. This is the programme where Grade Eight students will get, more than 800 students, the tablets that the Minister spoke about. This is the programme that would allow for us to have better improved grades in Mathematics and English. This is what the Hon. Minister spoke about. This is our programme from 2014 and we support it fully because it is a good programme, but what we are asking you to do is to be innovating and come up with ideas and good plans for Guyana. Do not be lazy and copy what we did, but come up with things that will complement what we have already done.

The next big ticket item in the budget that is being touted as new is the Early Childhood Education programme. The Early Childhood Education programme where we are looking to put…They call it a new approach shamelessly.

I turn the House's attention to 2014, a publication by a national newspaper the *Guyana Times* and this is what was stated:

> "Education Minister Priya Manickchand with Global Partnership for Education Board Chairman Julia Gillard…."

There was a photograph.

> "The Education Ministry has announced that at the last meeting of the Board of Directors on which Education Minister Priya Manickchand sits as a Director, representing Latin America and the Caribbean, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), approved a US$1.7 million education grant for Guyana".

I am hearing the comments about who wrote the article, but here, it is what Julia Gillard said. It is the former Prime Minister of Australia who is now the Chairperson of the board for Global Partnership for Education.

> "This is critical funding at a time when 58 million children of primary school age are still not in school…"

Guyana has earned this because it was to be an addition to all the good works we were doing. Guyana, presently, we left the APNU/AFC Government with an 85% enrolment in nursery education which is the highest in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Coming back and telling us that there is an Early Childhood Education programme and shamelessly calling it a "fresh approach" in the new Government is a stagnant move. What I would have liked to hear from the Minister of Finance is, given that the donor funding for education has been reduced by 10 % or more by now, from 2010, how are we going to make sure our education funding, which used to be 5% under the PNC, that has been move to between 16%, 14% and 17 % under the PPP, that is continued under this Government…? How are we going to sustain the growth that we have made and even go further? That is what I would like to hear. It is not to repackage what we had and come here and tell me it is a "fresh approach". This is stagnant; it is doing what we did two years ago.

The other item, uniform for children, was done by the PPP Government. In fact, it was done far more effectively than is being done now. The last year budget, which was mentioned by the previous speaker on my side, has still not been implemented. Their children, all over the hinterland regions, who have seen the faces of Ministers who went there to shake hands and distribute colours, have not been given their uniforms. They have been given boots and slippers, the "bs" programme, but they cannot go to school without their school uniform. They have not been given that.

The School Feeding Programme which, again, is repeated in the budget as though it is a fresh intervention is something that was started by the PPP/C Government. The extension of the 7,000 new children, who are going on the programme, is in the strategic plan that was left at the Ministry of Education. It was bringing the children who were off the programme on to the programme and what is frightening is that this programme was copied without people understanding the philosophy of the programme. What we had was not only a programme that kept our children filled on nutritious meals, but there was a programme that provided employment for people in the village, either by the making of the peanut butter or the making of the cassava bread.

What we have now is a bringing over from Brazil, for many of the schools, an importation from Georgetown, that biscuit with cream in the middle. Absolutely, there is no nutrition. It would be interested to learn who they are buying some of that from. Are they repaying the political investment, who we heard about, because they have totally failed to grasp the import of the programme for the village economy? I may say, Sir, that this is a programme that was recognised globally as a model for how Governments and developing countries can do several things with the same funding - feed children, develop skills in a community and provide employment. When this copying is being done, we are available to come and explain to you why we came up with something and why it is important that it stays the same way.

5.38 p.m.

Again, it is same APNU/AFC Government which said, on the campaign trail, that the education system is in tatters, everything is…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes more.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I move, at the same time, to ask that the Hon. Member has her five minutes, plus her five minutes extension, as agreed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Manickchand: We heard that everything was in tatters and these things were bad. If everything was in tatters, this adoption wholesale of our programme really makes a lie out of that claim because the Government is doing the exact same thing that we did. Outside of that Sir, we

heard that there was going to be a Commission of Inquiry. It is now nine months, none has been appointed, no work has been done, and as a result of that we have major things stalled up. For example, the policy, the strategic plan that we left in place, is waiting on this elusive Commission of Inquiry before they finalise it. That plan did not come about by magic, it was consulted on, all across this country, by stakeholders and it identifies what is wrong in the sector and what is needed in the short and medium term to fix it. That is what the commission, I understand, is going to do. If the commission is so important, then get cracking with it. Stop this delay. We have seen audits, where they think it is important. Is education not important? Is that why we have not had the commission, as yet? I call on the Government to lay the Education Bill. The Education Act in this country was not amended for over 100 years. Let us lay the Education Bill. It is to bring it up to a place where it can meet the needs of the Guyanese children. This constant refrains of why you did not do that… It was tabled in this House. I believe that it was sent to a Special Select Committee but it does not matter, even if we did not bring it. The day before we brought the Sex Offences Act, we did not have a Sex Offences Act. The day before we started the School Feeding Programme, we did not have a School Feeding Programme. In other words, governing is not about collecting for yourself; it is about progressing for the country.

The teachers' salaries: The teachers' five-year agreement is at an end as of 31st December. Teachers were promised a significant increase. They have got none. If the Government cannot give the teachers their increases, then, at least, give them the duty-free concessions that they earned under the previous Government. We left 30 agreed upon duty-free concessions for 30 teachers and those have been held up. I understand that after we left office, after the APNU/AFC came into office, that there were 46 more approved, and none have been given. Give the teachers their duty-free concessions.

There is urgent need for there to be some sort of collaboration between the public education system and the private education system, as an enterprise. Those children in the private schools are our Guyanese children. The professionals in the Ministry of Education will tell you, Mr. Minister, that if they were to come back into our public school system, it will flood us. The problems, which they are having, are that they do not have access to any of the texts. Letters have been written by a particular school, letters have been written to the Ministry, asking you, Sir, for access to the textbooks that are the property of the Ministry, and there has been no…

Mr. Speaker: The Speaker is reminding you that he is at this end of the hall and not across.

Ms. Manickchand: Thirty seconds more for me, Sir.

These are the issues that need to be addressed. I wish to raise very quickly, before I move on, to some issues in Region 5. Last night, in an attempt to paint the former Government as corrupt, the Hon. Member Mrs. Catherine Hughes raised the issue of the building of the Kato Secondary School. The Kato Secondary School is being built presently. It was to bring us closer to universal secondary education and take off the overcrowding at Paramakatoi Secondary School, to bring Region 8 up to a place where all of the children can access secondary school. That was publicly tendered and someone won. If, in fact, the contractor is not doing what he is supposed to do or the consultants, who are supposed to be supervising him, are not doing what they are supposed to do, then let the new Government take it up with them – take them to court and do what it has to do. As you know, why I am worried about that, Sir, it is because we had also, this country, built a school at Sand Creek and within a very short period after building that building the beams were cracking. We were attempting – the Hon. Attorney General would have those files - to take that contractor to court. To my surprise, upon the assumption of office, he was given a national award. I do not think he will be going to any court. When he comes here, and I am calling on the Minister of Education, the honourable gentleman, it is that he is to lay those matters in this House. I do not have the records, but there was nothing corrupt being done by the Ministry of Education with regard to that project. We are not there to finish it.

Your Honour, I want to raise some issues with you about Region 5. Region 5, you have heard about, Sir, from many speakers in this House, has had some serious human rights breaches over the last nine months. It has asked repeatedly for us to address these issues. The issue about the light, Sir, and I will give you a specific example. There is the issue with the light. One Milton Ramu did not ask the Government for the light. He bought a light and he put it there and he said it was there to keep his community safe. The officers from Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) mounted that light for him, then they came and took it off and they went away. They stole the light. They deprived him permanently of a light that was his. We were told by the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure that the lights at Bath Settlement and the lights at Bush Lot had to come down because the Government could not afford it.

We heard from the Hon. Member Jennifer Wade that the lights had to come down because Seafield did not have on the road. Seafield does not have lights on the roads. Give Seafield the lights. Do not take the lights from Bath Settlement and Bush Lot because somebody else does not have. The surprise came, Sir, when this Government, which was saying that it could not afford lights, found lights to give Pouderoyen and found lights to give Linden. It had to buy the lights and it is paying for the light bills for these places. We are happy that these places are getting the light bills. On what grounds did you remove the people's lights? Is it because you have found that you cannot even to field the candidate for the local government election in the Bath Settlement community? Is that why you removed the people's lights? It is discrimination, Sir.

The bus, which used to bring the children from Mahaicony River to the high school - there is no high school in there, and they cannot catch anything else - has been broken down and it has not been fixed. We are calling on the Government to fix it, and fix it now. The gas for the generator that Hon. Member Michael Carrington spoke about, what happened there, Sir, we bought a generator for the people of Maraikobai and that is the kind of help that is needed. If the Member does not understand, it is that he is in the wrong place. We had to assist, every now and then, with fuel. We are asking, again, that the Government assist the people with fuel in Maraikobai.

I want to end with one story. We heard from the Minister of Finance, and several persons over here, that there were no job losses. I want to tell the story of someone named, perhaps, Farida. She was a secretary, and has been a secretary for many years, 20-something years. She has two children. They both went to two top schools in this country because she looked at the person she was working with and wanted her children to have that kind of comfortable life. Her husband was a driver. This was finished at the time of the elections. Farida was fired. It could not have been for any other reason, but it was because of her perceived affiliation, and or the way she looked. Farida's daughter, who was studying law, had to drop out and she is now a young teacher, untrained, just trying to hold on to something until she can try to get into school again. Is Farida's child not entitled to the same life of your children, of our children? That is Farida. Do you want me to give you some more names? There is Haniff from the Ministry of Education; there is Roy and there are such a large number of persons. I am not speaking of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) who were knocked off. I am speaking of secretaries and drivers, the

people who have mortgages; people who have children, deserving of all that your children are deserving of. We call on you to stop the human rights abuses that are going quietly by every day.

I thank you Sir. [*Applause*]

Mr. Greenidge: I am inclined to take the advice of my distinguished colleague on the other side of the divide, concerning the desirability of sticking to foreign affairs matters. Let me take the opportunity…, notwithstanding the wisdom of that advice, because of what I have listened to is, for me, cynicism and reflective of selective amnesia. Mr. Speaker, just permit me, please, to make mention that when colleagues spoke of discrimination, the firings from public employment, and so forth, that I am speaking from the point of view of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If I say that, I do not believe it should be necessary for me to elaborate because, as regards to discrimination, random firings, and the like, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the institution that bore the brunt of that despicable period, a practice of the PPP. Do not let us go there. We hear crocodile tears. I see the colleague, who would know, on the other side of these benches, smiling very broadly. I am not going to say anymore because he at least, knows what I am talking about. [**An Hon. Member:** Is it Mr. Rohee?] *I throw meh corn I ain't call no fowl.*

When we come to deal with the problem of selective amnesia, we hear, for example, former Government Members of Parliament speaking as though as when they came into office they never used or benefited from anything that went before. Another Government comes into office and everything that went before they have inherited. It reflects a certain immaturity, so let me leave those issues.

I am called upon to stand to support the budget delivered by the APNU/AFC Minister of Finance so eloquently and so widely commended for the measures it contains, and also recognised as delivering the growth target set. I suddenly discovered that we have all sorts of economists on the other side, one of whom can tell us that putting taxes or restrictions on the imports of cars will lead to second-hand cars costing more than brand new cars. That is the sort of economics we are coming up with on the other side. [**An Hon. Member (Opposition):** Who said that?] Who else would say it? Who else would you say would say it? Look on your left hand side.

5.53 p.m.

Let us turn to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am happy to report that, in the eight months since I have acceded to the Office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and notwithstanding the obvious challenges that any new Administration would face and one has to admit that, that is what we seem to be failing to acknowledge on the other side, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has pursued its mandate with due diligence and alacrity, whilst seeking to shape more robust and relevant foreign policies in circumstances that have been changing and that are very difficult. I think that both sides acknowledge that.

In this regard, I have the pleasure, and indeed the ardent duty - I have been given that task - of providing guidance to His Excellency, the President, and the Cabinet, as regards the execution and implementation of Guyana's Foreign Policy.

Let me therefore start from the outset, with the most pressing problem, which I made reference to earlier. I am hastened to confess that, in 2015, our diplomatic energies had been focussed primarily in the direction of territorial integrity. It is no secret that the controversy arising out of Venezuela's unfounded claims to our territory has been our most ominous challenge. It has been continuously engaging the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For this reason, I believe that it would be remiss of me not to update this House on developments in that area, other than those that I have mentioned earlier.

During 2015, in response to the heightened threats to our territorial integrity and sovereignty, the Ministry sought to secure Guyana's borders through advocacy and diplomatic preaches, at the regional, bilateral and international levels. Significant, amongst these was the engagement with the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General for an early settlement of the controversy which arose as a result of Venezuela's contention, that the 1899 Award was *null and void.* Part of it the process with the Secretary-General entailed the hiring of an international legal team to guide Guyana in its attempts to pursue a juridical settlement, should the UN Secretary-General choose that option, an option that we have been pressing upon him. These actions on our part, ensued after the President of Venezuela issued two Decrees, which impacted negatively on the relations between Guyana and Venezuela.

The Decree 1787, now repealed, was enacted by President Nicolas Maduro and signed by him and the full complement of Venezuela's Council of Ministers. It was published in the Annual

Official Gazette, 40669, dated 27th May, 2015. That Decree created and activated the Maritime and Insular Operational Zone of Integral Defence and an Insular Strategic Region of Integral Defence. The jurisdiction of this purported Atlantic Zoning, which is also referred to as the Atlantic Facade Venezuela, had at its northern most points, the boundary with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and at the southern most points, having started in the middle of the mouth of Essequibo. It also attempted to usurp most of the maritime territories that formed the total Coastal Projection of our Republic. It also encompasses parts of the frontages of Barbados and the Republic of Suriname, and includes airspace within all of those areas.

I make mention of this because it is often forgotten how extensive the implications of these Venezuelans Decree are. This, in our view, is the most aggressive act by Venezuela to date. The Decree is intrinsically late to its view that the 1899 Arbitral Award is *null and void* and the attendance spurious claim to Guyana's Essequibo.

A technical mission from the UN, headed by Ms. Martha Doggett, Chief of the Americas Division of the Department of Political Affairs, visited Guyana during the period 29th August to 2nd September to discuss the options under the Geneva Agreement for a resolution of Venezuela's contention.

It is the view of Guyana that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has the authority, and I stress this Mr. Speaker, because, whilst we thought we had persuaded the UN of this, at times they seem not to be sure. It is the view of Guyana that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has the authority and the mandate to bring this matter to a definitive end. The issue of the concurrence of either parties or the lack thereof should not arise, if the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was requested to provide an advisory opinion.

Guyana reiterated its preference for a juridical settlement via the International Court of Justice to address that contention by Venezuela. In relation to our eastern neighbour, Suriname, that country's new Government has recently stated that its claim over Guyana's New River Triangle is back on Suriname's agenda.

It is anticipated that this issue will be addressed under the auspices of the National Border Commissions of Guyana and Suriname. Naturally, there can and will be dialogue at the highest

political levels between the two countries, namely, at the level of the Presidency and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, to take this particular issue forward.

Due to intense regional international lobbying, Guyana received the support of several international organisations, including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Commonwealth that expressed their full support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Guyana, including the right to peacefully exploit off-shore resources. The UN Secretary-General continues to actively engage the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela with a view to definitively resolving the controversy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has commenced a sensitisation programme to keep the Guyanese public abreast on matters relating to these borders. A Booklet entitled: *What you need to know about the definitive nature of the Guyana/Venezuela Boundary* was published in an effort to further sensitise the population. We have raised the issue in a number of fora, and in those fora there have been similar Booklets.

In the meantime, Guyana's relations with Brazil remain excellent. The Ministry intends to continue to pursue a number of key initiatives that will further cement these relations. During a visit by His Excellency, the President, and his team to Brasilia in July, 2015, for the MERCUSOR, a bilateral meeting was held between the President of Guyana and the President of Brazil. The President of Brazil gave Guyana the assurance of Brazil's full backing in relation to efforts for a peaceful resolution of the controversy. The Government of Brazil is in the process of putting in place preliminary arrangements for major infrastructural projects with Guyana. My Ministry is now well poised to engage our Brazilian partners to start to bring these to fruition in 2016.

I am pleased to announce to the House that, as part of that effort, Guyana and Brazil are in the final stages of arranging for the visit on 1st March, 2016 by Chancellor Maura Vieira, my Brazilian counterpart.

In the area of economic diplomacy, we have also engaged in reshaping our foreign policy to give greater emphasis to economic diplomacy, which we believe is a major pillar on which the accelerator to the development of Guyana lies. In this regard, we have begun the strategic reorganising of the various departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The economic diplomacy thrust includes encouraging and facilitating Guyanese in our diaspora to contribute to Guyana's national development through doing business, investments, trade, philanthropy and the transfer of skills and knowledge. In this regard, the overseas missions are currently mandated to pursue every opportunity that arises. Concomitantly, our overseas missions have been working assiduously to ensure that there are no hindrances to the efforts of tens of thousands of Guyanese who are planning to come home this year to celebrate our country's 50^{th} Anniversary as an independent nation.

Our greater emphasis on diplomacy also means that the missions are expected to more aggressively pursue trade opportunities and foreign-directed investments, in consonance with the development emphasise of the Government. For whilst we need investment, we seek investments that are feasible, sound and from the outset, bring opportunities for Guyanese people as a whole. In the pursuit of engaging our diaspora, we have also recognised that there was an absence of a structured mechanism for engagement in this regard. We have been working on crafting a Diaspora Engagement Strategy, which includes inputs from the relevant stakeholders and the diaspora. The Strategy, when completed, is expected to assist in establishing a structure that will help us to better respond to and channel the contributions of the diaspora to achieving maximum benefits aimed at achieving development. It should be noted that a number of other sister agencies have also begun to engage the diaspora and ours will remain the role of seeking to coordinate that exercise.

On the front of CARICOM, we continue to work on the expanded market access for our goods in the CARICOM markets. The Government has supported the deepening of the Regional Integration process in terms of Inter-Regional Trade, CARICOM'S External Trade Negotiations and multilateral developments in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), *et cetera.*

The question in CARICOM has been the renewed focus on the bilateral trade agreements which CARICOM has with Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

In October, 2015, Guyana met on the occasion of the 9^{th} Meeting of CARICOM/CUBA Joint Commission and exchanged proposals to enhance the preferential access to each other's markets for an expanded list of products, under the CARICOM/CUBA Trade Agreement. The two sides

will continue negotiations, during the course of this year, with a view to reaching an early agreement on key proposals.

As regards the World Trade Organisation, for small developing countries like Guyana, the WTO carries out a Trade Policy Review every six years. In 2015, my Ministry also coordinated the completion of Guyana's Third Trade Policy Review, under the WTO.

The Final Reports on the Review are presented at a special session of the WTO's General Council at the Secretariat in Geneva in September. At that meeting, the Members applauded the Government of Guyana's recent actions to initiate various public sector reforms, including a comprehensive tax review aimed at improving transparency and efficiency, as well as providing a levelled playing field for all businesses.

Significantly, I am exceedingly delighted to report that the WTO members also commended Guyana for rectifying the application of the Environmental Tax and the zero-rated Value-Added Tax (VAT) to both locally produced and imported products, and the enactment of the modified Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Bill.

In relation to the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM), I would just like to add that Guyana's Chairmanship of the Regional Trade Bloc, which commenced in July, 2014, ended in June, 2015. Guyana also carried out the functions of CARICOM'S High Representative, under the Caribbean Forum/European Union/Economic Partnership Agreement (CARIFORUM/EU/EPA), until December of last year.

As CARICOM'S High Representative, Guyana hosted the Third Meeting of the Ministerial Joint Council, under the CARIFORUM/EU/EPA in Georgetown, 16th July. I had the distinct honour and privilege to lead the Delegation to that meeting.

The main focus of the Joint Council was the mandated review of the EPA and the results of that review will guide the work of EPA Trade and Development Committee in 2015.

In 2015, the Ministry also provided collaborative support and guidance to Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and the Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL), concerning the development of geographical indicators for Demerara Sugar and Demerara Rum. Just in case the term geographical indicators do not mean much to Colleagues, this is the regime under which

France has exclusive rights to produce something called "champagne" with certain characteristics. In relation to other products, it has been agreed those other countries that can distinguish the characteristics of their products, either as a result of a process or as a result of some distinctive characteristics, can also have that distinction. It is in pursuit of that, that I made reference to GuySuCo and DDL.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Embassy in Brazil has sought and received technical assistance under the African/Caribbean/Pacific (ACP) Trade Capacity Programme to support the geographical indications initiatives of the two companies and that initiative will, we hope, come to fruition after completion of the study during the course of 2016.

6.08 p.m.

As regard the Caribbean bilateral, it is the view of the Government of Guyana that strong bi-lateral relations are at the heart of the Economic Integration Process, and have the proven ability to meet down to the benefit of the people of the countries of the region. And so, we have sought to strengthen relations between many of these partners.

We welcome as Members may recall the Hon. Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister of Barbados, who attended the Inauguration of the President Granger in the course of last year. I want to say that the opportunity was taken by the Barbadian Prime Minister to hold high level talks with senior Government functionaries in Guyana. Critical talks were also held between the two heads within the margins of the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government.

In June 2015, I met with the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, Senator Maxine McLean, in Georgetown to discuss the strengthening of bilateral ties. The occasion of the holding the Third Meeting of the Guyana-Barbados Joint Commission in Barbados, in October 2015, also provided the opportunity to hold such discussions. I want to say that, coming out of the Guyana-Barbados collaboration, a number specific initiatives was identified and Guyana, as well as Barbados, contributed to initiatives which would help strengthen the respective countries. I want to indicate that it is not simply a one-sided process. Assistance in the area of utilising skills in transport, civil aviation, culture, maritime and the like, were contributed.

The Ministry also arranged for the visit of the President and a team to Trinidad and Tobago. Arising from that visit, we did agree to set up a framework within which the cooperation between the two countries could be enhanced, and amongst the areas in which cooperation will be developed, especially with a view to capitalising on skills. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, it was in the area of energy services, even as Guyana is carrying out on its shelf work that can utilise the skills that Trinidad and Tobago has already developed to quite a high degree. That is a very positive development on the regional integration side.

In the 2015, as regard Latin America, Guyana's interest, especially as they relates to the preservation to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, were pursued. There was an attempt to expand mutually beneficial partnerships and to promote peace and stability. High level exchanges were held with the Presidents of Chilli, Columbia, Ecuador, and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of a number of these countries, including Mexico and Panama. Guyana's relation with Chilli, if I might isolate that for the moment, moved very positively. There was a number of cooperation programmes pursued as well as South-South Programmes.

On the political side, with Chilli in particular, there seem to have a high coincidence of interest and they pertain both to bilateral and are on the global agendas. We will be pursuing those during the course of 2016.

For South America as a whole, Guyana relations with the subcontinent, other than Brazil, continue apace. We recently, for example, in the case of Ecuador, discussed the establishment of an Ecuadoran Embassy in Georgetown. Ecuador has indicated there interest there. We have also begun the process of reengaging the Columbians with a view to collaborating in the area of trade and technical cooperation under the aegis of the Joint Commission.

On Cuba, there is similarly an extensive range of activities taking place and relations with Mexico have advanced quiet extensively, not only at the bilateral level, but in the framework at the Mexico-Caribbean Cooperation Programme.

On the United States of America (USA) front, since assuming in May 2015, Colleagues would remember that Guyana has seen a marked improvement in its relation with the United States of America. I do not want to hark back to some of the more unfortunate incidents that took place towards the end of the last Administration, but I would like to say that, for the first time in our

history, the USA, through its mission in Georgetown, publicly stated its support for Guyana's position on the controversy with Venezuela. Talks have intensified in this area and Members are aware that this, in fact, it is a seminal event, given the USA's role in the origin of the Arbitral Tribunal and the way in which both the USA and Venezuela benefited from the award.

Cooperation between the two countries was also maintained at a high level, especially in relation to capacity building in the area of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. In May 2014, the Government of Guyana and the United States (US) signed modified agreements and three of the letters of agreement on the Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement, on 8th April, 2011, beginning 2011, between the Government of Guyana and the Government of the United States have fructified and have led to some of the agreements that I have mentioned.

The relationship with Canada, which of course is the home of a very large Guyanese diaspora, traditional and more recent, Canada also remains one of the largest investors in the minerals and gold mining industries, in particular. Whilst most of our technical cooperation programmes are pursued within the framework of Canada-CARICOM Regional Corporation Programme, there are opportunities for more active bilateral cooperation, and we are in the process of pursuing these in the course of 2016.

One area in which, we have in recent times, perhaps allowed our energy to lapse, is the area pertaining to Asia, Africa, Pacific and Europe. These are areas that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has started to work on recently, on a variety of fronts, including dealing with the questions of the threats to the border. We have worked within that grouping, which would include China and the Republic of India. I would like to make special mention to some of the new initiatives that were taken place in relation to the African Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP) in particular, and in relation to India, which of course has a long standing relationship.

The very solid economic and social cooperation programmes with China over years have generated very high levels of investment. China, in its relation with the region, has also allocated something like US$3 billion of concession in the financing of eight Caribbean nations. It has pledge US$250 billion in investments for the countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Guyana stands to benefit from that fund and our relations will also be guided by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and common positions at the

multilateral level, with a view to pursuing the small states' agenda, which is a very important dimension.

As I mentioned, relations with India are quit dynamic and we will soon conclude a memorandum of understanding, which I believe was mentioned by the Minister in his Budget Speech. I refer here and underscore for emphasis…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have three minutes more.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Member be give five minutes as an extension to his original time.

Question put and agreed to. ,

Mr. Greenidge: I would just like to finish that section on the discussion of India on the high level exchanges between President Granger and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in 2015. We have a number of things to follow up, as it regards those particular set of exchanges.

On the issue of MERCOSUR, I am not going to go through in any detail, but to say, having reviewed what has been done in the period since we have been in office, there were some challenges. I would like to touch on those challenges before turning very briefly to 2016.

Notwithstanding, the efforts that I have described, we had a number of challenges, particularly on the human resources side, which I know Colleagues would have a special interest in. We have had to critically examine what was extant, as regards human resources, and we have begun to make the necessary adjustments. The exercise obviously involves the streamlining of personnel, including our representatives abroad. It also meant that we have had to identify and recruit suitably qualified and competent persons to head our key overseas missions with a view to maximising the potential of Government's foreign policy paradigm shift.

It would have been foolhardy for us to take steps to strengthen our representation abroad without buttressing the capacity at Takuba Lodge, our Headquarters. It is therefore in this context that a number of senior diplomats have also been recalled to Head Office, some more will be returning in 2016. As I had said publicly before, having the right mix of experience and young officers functioning at the Ministry, is important, not only for our efficient functioning, but also for

proper succession planning and seamless continuity of the effective pursuit of Guyana's foreign policy goals and objectives.

During the course of 2015, the implementation of the Ministry's Work Programme, in the execution of this policy, was carried out through the Political Trade, International Cooperation, Consul and Administrative Departments at Headquarters, and through the diplomatic and consular missions abroad. In 2016, that structure is to be modified.

As the Ministry seeks to conclude the accreditation of its diplomats in the various capitals in which we have sought *agremos*, we are at the same time engaging in a comprehensive organisational restructuring in order to make the Ministry's various departments and units more amendable to the foreign policy direction of our Government. Many of these new configurations will be headed by our senior diplomats who have been recalled to serve at Head Office. Concomitantly, at the level of Head Office the Foreign Service Institute…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member you have five minutes more.

Mr. Greenidge: The Foreign Service Institute has been put on a sound footing with the aim of providing relevant training to the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the wider public service, where necessary. One of the main purposes of this exercise is to staff the Ministry with professionals pursuing specialised diplomatic careers, who would provide the institutional memory and capacity that are so vitally important to our future and the protection of our interest.

In 2016, the Ministry intends to focus more attention on helping to build capacity and opportunities in the services sector of Guyana's economy. We are cognisant of the importance of this sector to economic growth and development. The trading environment in which Guyana operates has already signal key changes in the post-2015 global environment. Guyana's only option, therefore, is to concentrate on improving its competitive posture and diversifying its economic base. This reality will require a robust approach to the services and investments sectors, for which we have some responsibility.

In Guyana, the production of services is in excess of 60% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but accounts for less than 12% of exports. The potential, therefore, for the development of the services sector and the expansion of services trade is immense. But for this to happen, the

capacity of the services sector and providers and their access to international markets would have to be further developed through foreign investment and trade support. Thus, in 2016, we will work closely with the private sector and, of course, the sister agencies to develop that strategy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also intends to take a more robust approach in our public diplomacy efforts. Our plans involve going beyond merely keeping our foreign policy in the public domain.

As was mentioned before, it extends to reaching out in a sustain manner to reaching out to our nation youths to further educate them in key aspects of Guyana's foreign policy and capturing their own energies and initiatives to enhance our foreign policy formulation.

6.23 p.m.

As was mentioned before, we have many important bilateral partners in the Caribbean, Latin America, North America, Europe and so forth. Our efforts would be to accelerate, strengthen and deepen these respective relations. We intend to continue with our partners in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. As a founding member of the Caribbean Community, Guyana has also been in the fore front of regionalism and we intend to continue, and to further lift our efforts in that regard. We will continue to meet our treaty and other international obligations, as we seek to fortify our presence and expand our role into the discussions and the actions that permeate international organisations.

We believed that this space afforded by the various international fora should be maximised as a space where small developing states like Guyana, have a voice for matters affecting them, as well as a platform from which we could contribute to the decisions affecting the international systems. I thank you very much Mr. Speaker and Colleagues for the attention. [*Applause*]

Vice–President and Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs [Mr. Allicock]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Before I get into the business of the debate, I would like to take this opportunity to say to the people of Annai that we are with them at this time of their mourning. We know how sad it could be.

I stand to make my contribution to this 2016 National Budget Debate, a Budget that is a coalition Budget; a Budget that is based on togetherness and unity. I take this opportunity to apologise to

Hon. Members Mr. Gill, Mrs. Pearson-Fredricks and Ms. Campbell-Sukhai. I am truly sorry that, as a Government, we were unable, in our eight months in office, to fix all the damage created by the PPP/C over last 23 years.

I would like to allow the Indigenous peoples of this country to know that we are working to fix this. It is a situation that they know that communities are divided. Communities are highly politicised, and for us to move forward, we have to bring the people back together. That is what the coalition is about. It is about the entire Guyana; it is not about one party; it is about every single Guyanese, including the Indigenous peoples.

I note well, the presence of some born-again Indigenous members on the other side. These Hon. Members may have had their Damascus Moment at the end of their journey to the Opposition benches. I wondered where these Hon. Members were when Sir John in Aishalton was slapped; when the members of Upper Mazaruni were challenged and up to today they are in court for their land rights. I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, on the conflict of interest regarding Amerindian lands. I thought he would have spoken about accountability, the intimidation tape to the CSOs, and Carifesta X instead. The Hon. Member, Mrs. Pearson-Fredricks, spoke of being offended by someone from the Government benches having mining blocks on Indigenous peoples' lands. The Hon. Member would know that she is being conservative with the truth. The Hon. Member, Mr. Charlie, specifically referred to Tasserine and asked how soon they would receive their titles. Hon. Member, Ms. Campbell-Sukhai, made a lot of comments and asked a lot of questions, but this Minister is a failed Minister.

The issue of mining blocks being awarded in lands traditionally occupied/utilised and applied for as village lands by Guyana Indigenous Peoples, as in the case of Tasserine, are still unresolved issues that were inherited. These are things that were there. I recall that the Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, was the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs at that time. I recall also that the Hon. Member, Mrs. Pearson-Frederick, served as advisor to the Hon. Minister, Ms. Campbell-Sukhai at that time. If not, all these blocks would have been awarded.

These awards were made after the residents of Kangaruma and Tasserine, for example, had applied for these lands to become their village lands. These Hon. Members of the Opposition were part of the team which participated in handing over worthless pieces of papers to the

residents of Kangaruma and Tasserine, suggesting to the leaders of these communities that they were being handed land titles. I have the evidence here. I did not want to describe the statements of these Hon. Members in this House as hypocritical since that might be unparliamentarily. I would therefore refrain from attempting to describe those statements. I am, however, thankful that these Hon. Members are now the new and enlightened representatives of the Indigenous peoples. It would now be very useful for them to present their thoughts regarding how we can, together, undo the damage which they did. We have a country to build and we have the Indigenous peoples to look after, it is time to come together to attack the issues rather than personalities.

Having addressed those issues, I now turn my attention to Budget 2016. Budget 2016 is a people's budget. Budget 2016 is about improving the quality of life of Guyanese across Guyana's 10 administrative regions. It is about fixing wharfs, hinterland airstrips and ocean going vessels which serves our hinterland population, improving education delivery and health care services, boosting agriculture and creating a healthy economy. Budget 2016 will create jobs, provide training for our young people and give our senior citizens additional disposal income. [***Interruption***]

It is continuously said over the other side to fix it. It means that they are guilty of breaking it and having this country like this. Budget 2016 will enable us to enjoy a green city and a green economy. One can already see and smell the change in our capital city.

We have removed the tentacles of central Government from the affairs of Indigenous peoples' villages and communities. Villages are now free of political interference from the Government side. I now invite Members of the Opposition to join with us so that the villages can breathe free of political pressure again.

Guyana's first Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Resources Conference was a success. The Conference was exclusively managed and facilitated by the National Toshaos Council (NTC). Indigenous peoples Non-Governmental Organisations participated fully and freely in the deliberations of the National Toshaos Council Conference and the Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Resources Conference. That never happened before. Members are guilty on the other side of

keeping them out of previous conferences. How could you claim that you care for the Indigenous peoples?

For the hinterland youth, employment was launched. Budget 2016 will make possible, the massive explosion of the programme across Guyana's hinterland. My Colleague, the Hon. Mrs. Garrido-Lowe, has already addressed this. The Hon. Member, Ms. Campbell-Sukhai should talk more with the Hon. Minister, who is now in full control of ensuring that proper education is given to our young people.

Real training is taking place in our villages. This not being red and dread like my Colleague said. That was what it used to be, like red cashews and the red feyres in those communities, intimidated by the Hon. Permanent Secretary at that time. They had to do or leave. Our young people are no longer a part of a young political brigade. They are being prepared to face the challenges of the world and to make successful men and women of themselves, not to be beggars. Not to say at the end of two or three years of spending good money, "We do not know what to do." They must be able to say "Thank you for training me. I am now moving on, I have a job".

The Amerindian Land Titling Project is back on track. The shortcomings of the period, which proceeded 11th May, 2015, are being address.

6.38 p.m.

The Ministry is addressing the Indigenous peoples land issues. To this end, work has started on the establishment of the Hinterland and Indigenous Peoples' Lands Commission. The situation is that the communities are aware that there is a process known as free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and this will take time. We have to consult and do so properly. That is what has happened. There are 212 communities with over 75,000 Indigenous peoples to take care off.

Protection for Hinterland Development

Budget 2016 provides for the following interventions which are geared to improve the lives of Guyana's Indigenous peoples in the education sector.

Commencement of work and design for a new dormitory to house the tertiary level students from the Hinterland: $10 million is allocated for that.

Expansion of the Hinterland employment and youth services - $997,410,000.

Support via subvention to the Bina Hill Institute of Learning - $35 million: this institution is helping those young people who are leaving school to go to the next phase where they would be properly rounded as young adults to take care of their businesses within their communities.

The establishment of resource and document centre for Indigenous peoples - $6 million: this is a need to have our records, our information and our history properly stored.

Acquisition of boats, outboard engines and minibuses to get children to and from school - $25 million: I am not sure that the colour matters.

Schools in Port Kaituma, Santa Rosa, Baramita, Matthews Ridge, Powakaru and Barasirwau will benefit from improvement and the addition of living quarters while a new secondary school will be constructed at Waramuri; Akawini will get a new Nursery School; Karawab and Bethany Primary Schools will be improved; Yarashima will be extended and Warapoka Secondary School will also be extended. Mashabo and Bethany Primary Schools will be provided with living quarters for staff. These are all part of a package to the sum of $196,352,000. Paramakatoi School and Micobie Nursery School will benefit from significant improvement as part of works valued at $36,610,000; schools will be constructed at Tabatinga, Pai Pang and Baishaidran. Living quarters will be built at Sand Creek and major improvements are planned for Surama, Aishalton and Woweta Nursery Schools and Kwatata Primary School at a cost of $94,605,000.

The electricity system at Saint Ignatius Secondary School will be upgraded - $9,561,000; Kairuni Nursery School, St. Cuthbert's Primary School, Arau and Philippi Primary Schools will benefit from solar systems where $4.4 million is allocated for this.

Infrastructural Development

We are rebuilding the Umana Yana. It is the pride of Guyana. Its place in the history of Guyana is precious. Guyana will have the Umana Yana in time for the 50th Independence anniversary celebrations. I wish to say to the Wai Wai brothers, who are presently reconstructing what was

destroyed, that I am proud of them and I am happy that they were able to make it. We are going to show that, given a chance, we could help to build Guyana.

The electricity system of Matthews Ridge, Port Kaituma, St. Cuthbert's Mission, Siparuta, Orealla, Maraikobai, Mocomoco, Wauna and Sugar Hill will be improved at a cost of in excess of $120 million.

Roads will be rehabilitated at Port Kaituma and Matthews Ridge after two decades of abandonment. More roads will be rehabilitated at Baramita, Bartica, Puruni, Itaballi, Mabura, Kurupukari to Tabatinga, Ituni to Kwakwani and Mahdia. Bridges will be built and fixed at Cassandra Crossing and Sand Creek, Aishalton, Baishaidran, Paruima, Hosororo, Papaya and Arokoro. These works will be done at a cost of more than $1.7 billion. More roads will be constructed at Mabaruma and Moruka to the tune of $31 million. Bartica Stelling and the goods wharf at Kingston, which serves the Northwest District, will be rehabilitated. Mahdia airstrip will be completed. The following Hinterland airstrips will be rehabilitated – Eteringbang, Annai, Paramakatoi, Kurupung, Kato, Kopinang and Monkey Mountain. This project is worth $241 million.

The development projects listed represent a sample of the interventions which are geared to take Guyana's Hinterland and the Indigenous residents closer to a good life. These interventions will create jobs. One just has to use his or her common sense and look around and use the opportunity that is given through these projects. It will restore hope and improve village economies. We, in the Ministry, are aware of the Government's situation. It is about togetherness. Instead of doubling up or duplicating, we work within Ministries to give that support and this is what is shown here. The benefits come from all of these Ministries to the Indigenous peoples and the people who live in the Interior.

From my interactions and working with my fellow citizens across Guyana's 10 Administrative Regions, I conclude that there are only 32 persons who feel that *Budget 2016* is not a good budget. Nevertheless, they have been included for the good life.

The Hon. Member, Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai, is on record in the *Guyana Times* dated Friday, 8th February, 2016 saying that the Budget did not adequately provide for Guyana's Indigenous peoples. But you heard, not too long ago, about the benefits that will be shared to these peoples.

The Hon. Member clearly did not examine the Budget. The Hon. Member also played the stuck record of 2,000 CSOs becoming jobless. Again, in the newspapers, it is stated that it is 1,972. I have a Cabinet document that goes to the amount of 1,952 CSOs. They say that the CSOs that are being talked about are young people. Anyone can go investigate this to see how many are not young people. Probably they are full grown youths. This was to the tune of $234,240,000. The programme ended in April, 2015.

Further, there is a cancelled cheque that was supposed to be used to pay the very CSOs that the Opposition claims this Government knocked off. This cheque was cancelled on the 10th May, 2015. The world knows that CSOs were not employees and that the programme ended before General Elections in 2015.

We have moved forward. The Hinterland Employment and Youth Service (HEYS) is a training programme and the Hon. Member, Valerie Garrido-Lowe, explained, in details, that it replaces a young political brigade. It is geared to help with the development of the Indigenous youths. Simultaneously with HEYS, we are working towards the development of the more than 75,000 Indigenous citizens. I invite the Hon. Pauline Campbell-Sukhai to be Indigenous.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have four minutes remaining.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Hon. Member be given five minutes added to his original time. I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence on a Point of Elucidation, Standing Order No. 40 (b). I believe the comment and the statement made by the Hon. Vice-President and Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs is a racist one and I… [***Interruption***]

[*Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.*]

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: …demand an apology.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member…

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: For any Vice-President…

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member…

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: …to refer to me, as a Member of Parliament, to be Indigenous is racist.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, it is customary that, when the Speaker attracts your attention and begins to address you, you cease what you are doing and reclaim your seat.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

6.53 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I am bound to say that Hon. Members must know that, if they speak loudly enough, they will disturb the speaker on the floor and this Speaker too. I have been very indulgent with Hon. Members and I do not want to muzzle them. It is a very familiar term, perhaps, but I must say that we have to exercise restraint. We cannot do it if we have bedlam. Hon. Member, when you rise on a Point of Order, you tell me, the Speaker, what that Point of Order is based on, then you make your statement and then you leave it to the Speaker. That is the procedure and I will ask Hon. Members to follow it. If a Member rises and proceeds to make a speech and then draws a conclusion, there is nothing for the Speaker to do but to thank the Member and move on. So, I am asking Members to remember that.

I did hear your point. I thank you.

Hon. Member, Mr. Allicock, I do believe that you can express yourself differently and not in the manner in which you referred to the Hon. Pauline Sukhai. [***Interruption***]

[*Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.*]

Hon. Members must allow the Speaker to do what he must do. Mr. Dharamlall, you are fast becoming the most noticeable heckler in the Chamber. It is not to your credit, sir. Now, Hon. Member, Mr. Sydney Allicock, please…

Mr. Allicock: I thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Would you withdraw the term or the manner in which you addressed the Hon. Member just now?

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw. I apologise.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed, Hon. Member.

Mr. Allicock: The Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs is in consultation with the National Toshaos Council (NTC) and the villages with regards to the Amerindian Act. The protection of the rights of the Indigenous peoples is at the core of these conversations. We agree that the Act needs to be amended in some respect to assure that appropriate safeguards are in place to deal with matters such as land rights, and environmental and wildlife issues. We will work with the villages, the communities, the NTC, Indigenous peoples, sister Ministries and international organisations as we address these issues. I am proud to say that the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs has a capable team. Staff could handle this and we are going to ensure that all these activities will be met on time.

Renewable clean energy, especially for schools and health facilities, is another major issue that we will address. As detailed by the Hon. Minister, Mrs. Hughes, information and communications technology (ICT) connectivity for schools and community buildings will be addressed. This is part of the approach to ensuring that information and education are taken to our citizens where they live. It is essential to connect Coastal Guyana to Hinterland Guyana, the realisation of one nation, as advocated by His Excellency the President.

We want the Hinterland and the coast to have a two-way flow of education because we, as Indigenous peoples, are the keepers of the environment that gives to each and every one of us a life. There is where true life is because we know and understand a lot about the laws of nature and how the ecosystem works. So, we have a role to play in the development of our country. Agriculture products, including fruit farms, are also on the Ministry's agenda.

Adequate potable water supply is also another important agenda item for the Ministry in 2016. The Hon. Minister of Finance presented a budget that is for all Guyanese. I say to him and his team that they did a wonderful job of including the opportunity for the Indigenous peoples to be given that chance to help in the development of the nation. He has given us the recipe; we also have the formula. The good life beckons; we must respond. We have been given this opportunity and we should not lose it. I now, therefore, commend this Budget for passage in the honourable House. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, before I comment on the more substantial items of my presentation, in passing, I just want to say that I know that the Hon. Vice President is capable but maybe he travels too much. I thought, by now, that the Hon. Vice-President would have, at least, gathered some rice markets. I also noticed that, in eight months, he has not been able to put together any bilateral agreement with any country or association that brings food or development to Guyana. I know that you have some more time, hopefully by next Budget. I will ably respond to that in the positive.

I must congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Jordan, for his first, full one-year Budget. This Minister, in particular, is a person I respect. I recall, during his days as Budget Director, I always stopped by and sought his advice on a variety of issues and he was always willing to provide it. However, I think that it is unfortunate that the things he said recently are in contradiction to what he was taught by the "Master Blaster", the Hon. Opposition Leader, and his ex-boss, Mr. Bharat Jagdeo.

The objective of a budget is to highlight and indicate what the Government will do for the people for a period of one year and how funds will be allocated to carry out the requisite activities. Sometimes more is required; sometimes less is spent and some has to be returned to the Consolidated Fund.

This Budget is like the phantom; this Budget is full of illusions. The Hon. Minister of Finance reminds me of a three-card player at Bourda Market; one time one sees King of Spades and, another time, one does not see it. This Budget represents a blur. A serious Government that claims it is concerned about the have nots, a serious Government which, during its campaign for office, indicated that it was campaigning for the people should present a budget that reflects the cornerstone of its ideological position.

Let me highlight a few items: I start with Value Added Tax (VAT). There is a Member of this Government who, when in Opposition, hammered the then Government, the PPP/C, for the implementation of the Value Added Tax, and, on several occasions, in every pathway and byway, told this nation that they would reduce VAT substantially or eradicate VAT. There is a gentleman in Guyana, a well-known con man by the name of Byron France. He attempted to sell City Hall; he sold Parade Ground and he sold the bauxite ship, Saguenay. When it comes to the

Value Added Tax, the present Government pulled a Byron France on the people of Guyana. [**An Hon. Member:** A who?] Byron France was his name. [**An Hon. Member:** The President?] [**Mr. Nandlall:** The present Government.] The present Government… I know not to mention the President's name. [**An Hon. Member:** You know you do not have to refute that point of view with us. You know I would admit though.] Well, beginning with you.

We call on the Minister of Finance to keep the promise of APNU/AFC and to reduce the VAT or eliminate it in totality. No country can develop unless there is a strong manufacturing sector. The key to a manufacturing sector is cheap, reliable and sustainable power. The then Opposition, now Government, traversed this country and pounded us on the issue of Amelia Hydro-dam, a project that would have given us over 160 megawatts of reliable and sustainable power to generate and expand our manufacturing capacity, a project that would have resulted in job opportunities and many other things. The project has been cancelled and the Government's Budget has not given Guyanese any idea as to when the Government will tackle the issue of cheap and reliable energy and has not identified funding for an alternative to the hydro project.

I noticed another con in the making. A 40-50 megawatts wind farm is an enormous enterprise anywhere in the world. It is renewable energy. The Hon. Minister, Mr. Patterson, knows this. Very few places in the world have tackled a wind farm of 40-50 megawatts. Renewable energy, at this point, particularly in that area, is still the most expensive source of power generated. Thus, the pronouncement of a wind farm at Hope is premature and represents another con but for those who have a personal interest in this project. Where is the feasibility study?

The Opposition, together with some friends of mine, namely Mr. Philips, Professor Hinds and others, have indicated, on several occasions, that there is an ethnic economic imbalance in Guyana. Mr. Speaker, if you were a foreigner, you would believe that this was imposed during the last 23 years, but statistics would show that the economic strength of Afro-Guyanese, rural Indians and Amerindians grew 1,000 times during the last 23 years. When the PPP came to power, there was no black middle class. All left; all ran during the Burnham era. Ask the Hon. Minister, Dr. Rupert Roopnarine. Minister Roopnarine spoke on this on several occasions.

There was no modernisation in Guyana. Before 23 years, there were no functioning hospitals, no villages with potable water, no roads with [*Inaudible*]. Your neighbour did not have a car and television before 23 years ago.

7.08 p.m.

Evidence shows that the PPP/C empowered the Afro-Guyanese, rural Indians and Amerindian peoples while the past Peoples National Congress (PNC) Government brought waste and poverty to Guyana.

This Government has access to billions of taxpayers' deposits in the banks in Guyana. Yet, while the Hon. Minister spoke eloquently about the need to ensure that 30% of the economy is in the hands of the have nots, he has not indicated how he will implement that transformation and that is the 3% and third aspect of the three-card illusion. The Minister of Finance has an obligation to implement the 30% distribution he speaks of by way of a Government guarantee so that small businesses will receive loans for start-up capital projects after approval by the Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest). This Government needs *to walk the walk and not talk the talk*.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on the issue of the village economies. The President has made the villages a very noble pet project of his and we must give him some credit for that. However, I am very disappointed that the Minister only selected a few villages - Buxton, Triumph and Ithaca - for such initial development or, maybe, they are just examples. This House needs clarity on whether these funds or additional funds will be allocated for projects in communities such as Lichfield, Hopetown, Unity, Leonora, Enmore, Weldaad, Belladrum and others. Nothing is wrong with these villages. There are also areas in Regions 8 and 9 that are blessed with productive agricultural lands and they should be part of the village projects.

What must be noted is the failure of the Minister of Finance to illustrate and specify the strategy that will be put in place to manage the dispensation of these expenditures. In addition to the selection process of the individual participants, whether there will be training, the criteria of funding and other related issues must be pronounced on. Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to, in anyway, say you are an old man; I will never say that because I do not know your age. But I know that you are aware that the late L F S Burnham, the late President, was very aggressive on village economics and, together with the elder statesman, Eusi Kwayana, and an organisation

called ASTRA, developed several agriculture and livestock schemes in many communities in Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you can recall, but I can certainly enlighten you to the fact that this endeavour collapsed for basic reasons. For example, the people of Pomeroon could not get their passion fruit to Georgetown in a timely manner. There was a lack of transportation. Pumpkins and ground provision rotted on the ground in many communities. Packaging, storage and marketing were absent from this process. I hope that the Hon. Minister of Finance can answer some of my queries which will determine whether the people of Buxton and Triumph's farm system will be supported by adequate roads to bring their products out of the back dam, in particular during rainy seasons, and whether he has spent time to look at the reasons behind the past failures.

It would be good if the Minister of Finance, in his Budget defence, could point out whether he plans to allocate funding for packaging and marketing of these produce. One of the critical elements here is start-up capital or initial expenditure to support the village enterprise entrepreneurs. To me, the Minister of Finance was not clear on this. The Minister of Finance brought this Budget to the honourable House and indicated that billions of dollars will be spent to develop village economies, but he did not indicate whether there is funding for feasibility studies and planning, plus his presentation lacks expectation and did not emphasise the economic impact on the villages, in particular employment.

The days of providing something to do for a certain ethnic group are over, in particular Afro-Guyanese. We cannot just empower them in the public service, by the People's Militia or by the National Service. We have to empower them so that they can become businessmen and businesswomen. The Minister needs to tell us whether these billions of dollars will go beyond two boxes of ochro, four cows, 10 pounds of yam, six hogs or if the end results of this allocation will result in dramatic increase in production of these items, and whether there will be put in place an aggressive response from the Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC). In essence, we cannot put the village economies in place and we cannot put the production elements of the village in place unless the Guyana Marketing Corporation is modernised and activated properly or we will have the same problem like we had in the past.

Furthermore, the Hon. Minister must tell this House whether his decision to select the villages was based on ethnicity, history or geography, whether these factors led to the identification of locations, and whether the budgetary proposal has room for rural Indians and Amerindians.

Another issue that bothers me is the silent decision to restructure the economy so that the resources of our country can respond to the call of Dr. Hinds, Eric Phillips, Dr. Thomas and others. This call might be timely and, in particular, with the pending closure of Wales Estate, these decisions must be brought before the House and debated extensively. I believe that the catalyst of this 30% initiative that the Minister has focused on can, in a positive manner, energise small businesses but it must be handled in a bipartisan manner and must not be seen as a means to put one ethnic group against another. I have not accused the Minister of doing that; I am just saying that we have to be careful in terms of how it is being handled.

The potential of hundreds of small business entities can be financed through a financial structure from the banking institutions. These banks host billions of dollars of taxpayers' money and, sometimes, it is very difficult for a small businessman or businesswoman to get a loan from these banks. So, there has to be some assurances. It does not make logical sense for the Minister to beat his chest and tell this nation that he is going to ensure that 30% of the national economy goes towards the have nots so they can become the haves and, at the same time, he does not look at the restructuring of the banking system; he does not find a way to put the mechanisms in place so that a small man can become the real man.

The Minister of Finance should note that the banks in Guyana are custodians of taxpayers' money and, while the banks cannot offer loans to Tom, Dick and Harry, the Minister of Finance must put in place mechanisms so that 30% of the deposits can go to our small business and village projects approved by GO-Invest.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn to mining. An important aspect of the mining industry is its impact on small miners. I want to use this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Guyana for appointing Mdm. Broomes as Minister. I think her heart is in the right place and she will protect the rights of the small and the abused.

The President has spoken about village economies and what should not be forgotten are African villages and the role the mining industry played in their development. Mr. Speaker, the strength

of these villages were elders like my grandfather and, even possibly, your grandfather, who went in the bush, not the Interior in those days - we said grandfather went in the bush - who left their families for six and seven months, who returned with their gold and diamond and who bought land, built houses and supported their children so that they can gain an education. We can call them pork knockers but those days are long gone. Now, we have small miners but the problems are still the same. They are allowed to work on lands that belong to the landlord; they find gold and diamond; then they are driven off like cattle. [**Mr. Bulkan:** What is the Master Blaster doing?] We got to do it together. These small miners are the real prospectors and the Guyana Geological and Mines Corporation (GGMC) has failed them by supporting corrupt mining officials and greedy landlords.

What is interesting is that the APNU/AFC coalition went to these villages prior to Elections and pledged to protect the rights of the small and the weak, yet this Budget has failed to highlight how the GGMC, as an institution, will protect those I spoke of earlier.

We need legislation that will clearly allow the small miner, who is, indeed, the initial prospector, to delink his find from the landlord but provide the landlord with fair compensation. [**An Hon. Member:** We have.] The legislation needs to be strengthened. The small miners or the modern porknockers were the strength of dozens of villages and the Hon. Member, Dr. Roopnarine, knows this because he is a familiar visitor of Buxton, even in the days when he was tormented by the People's National Congress. The pork knockers have been the base of dozens of African families. This Budget should be amended so that the engine of growth can be cemented around the gold and diamond industries, which can, once again, play a part of the economic development of the villages. It must happen and I anticipate that the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources would pronounce on these matters and will acknowledge that the absence was a mistake by the Minister of Finance.

The 30% access in the national economy that this Government speaks of must also target mining lands. Let us not only *talk the talk*; this Budget must allow us to *walk the walk*. My Good friend, fellow Buxtonian Professor David Hinds, Eric Phillips and Dr. Clive Thomas, have spoken at length about the need to empower certain sections of the economy. As a matter of fact, Mr. Phillips said that the Afro-Guyanese represent 3% to 5% of the national economy. I differ with his conclusion and I have no idea where he received his facts. We cannot advocate walking into

the vaults at the bank and handing out money. We cannot take people's vehicles and homes and hand them to the have nots so that they can become the haves. But let us work together to put in place a perceived fair environment that will address the issue of ethnic equality and a balance class system. Again, the Government has failed to bring a solution to the perceptions to the table. It is this Government that rallied around this country and spoke of the inequalities in the economic system. It is this Government that said that it needs to set aside 30% and it needs to restructure the economy, but this Government is being feeble in its approach to solve this problem. Bring a paper to this Parliament; let us debate and discuss it.

The whole cowboy days of the Western America was dominated by gold and cattle, then the railroad. In Guyana, we have gold and diamond. The Budget needs to be amended with the introduction of mechanisms to access the 30% of the gold and diamond lands. We cannot throw this 30% figure in an unscientific manner. It must be justified and must be structured by the means of good and fair governance. We must put in place the fair mechanism that will allow the Hinds, the Phillips and the Thomases to recommend valuable solutions to historical cultural issues.

As a young man growing up in Buxton, my mother used to tell me to not like money. She said, "God does not like people who like money." And many Afro-Guyanese were told this: do not like money; it is bad if you like money.

7.23 p.m.

I am saying here is that we have to turn this clock around. Nothing is wrong with money. All money is not good money.

Let me go back to mining. Mining is another key and fundamental issue. The absence of a strong Government strategy to improve the management of the gold industry is worrisome. The key issues are landlordism, protection and development of small miners and land reclamation. For each of these areas there needs to be stronger legislation to give more teeth to the authority and officials at the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC). Legislation should be introduced that would ensure that each medium and large-scale applicant gain a temporary permit first, with guidelines on how to operate and would proceed with prospecting as part of the initial stage. Prior to the operator being granted official mining licence, an adequate reclamation

plan with proper bond must be put together. Too much mining is going on in Guyana that leaves the land in a terrible state of affairs. In developing countries, after a person mines the land must be able to tolerate man, animal and plants. The Closed Area Committee, which comes under the board, and in many way the Minister, should be abolished and all lands, except those set aside to small miners, should be processed by means of lottery and a bidding system. The closed area system leads to corruption, nepotism and all kinds of other isms.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes more.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given his full time, whatever time is available to him now plus the five minutes.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Lumumba: This new legislation will serve as an obstacle to landlordism. I listened to Senator Bernie Sanders, the United States of America presidential contestant, on his pronouncement of the 1% which controls the American economy. I immediately saw the nexus between the 1% in Guyana which controls the gold and diamond industry. In many ways it serves as a hindrance to the development of small miners and the equitable distribution of wealth in our society. I thought that this budget proposal would have and should have pinpointed measures that would be put in place to expand the revenue base of the country, by ensuring that our primitive system of allocating gold and diamond lands is dispensed with by means of legislation and we put a halt to landlordism and monopoly.

The budget presentation in this area contradicts APNU/AFC pre-election promise to make the small man the real man. Government can only expand its revenue base if its natural resources are put to proper use. The more mining lands are made available for work, in particular with the need to have more independent operators and small miners, it would create more opportunities for revenue growth. It is to the advantage of the Government to control landlordism and ensure that more small miners are involved in the process. This not only creates economic opportunities for the small man but increases employment, increases small business and has a lot of implications for villages and our community as a whole.

The petroleum sector: Oil and gas are on the horizon. Oil and gas are probably the most powerful natural resources on the planet today, either for the good or the bad. Oil and gas have destroyed countries such as Nigeria; it has made some countries grow; it made some countries stable; it is on our horizon. This budget does not illustrate how the Government will prepare for the petroleum industry. This budget lacks a futuristic approach to its development. For example, the Minister should have pledged funding to the University of Guyana now. We must not wait on ExxonMobil. If we wait on ExxonMobil, it would want something in return. We should immediately start in September a two-year diploma or a four-year degree programme in petroleum. We should immediately have a relationship with Trinidad, some form of collaboration, so we can train potential technicians about the industry. We should ensure that the Guyana Technical Institute (GTI) becomes functional in this area so that there can be technicians. Furthermore, in this budget, the Government of Guyana should have set aside the training of a significant number of technical personnel by means of collaboration with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and ExxonMobil. Again, this shows the lack of creativity and the absence of vision when it comes to the handling of our economy.

The Minister of Natural Resources – Mr. Speaker, I know I should be looking at you but I want to look at him a bit - I know he means well, and he has spoken at length about the Sovereign Wealth Fund, but speaking at length is not good enough. The time has come in which a concept paper or some proposal or White Paper should be brought before this National Assembly for discussions and debate.

In closing, on my way here today - I would whisper at the appropriate time to my good friend Hon. Minister Joseph Harmon - I saw a very strong supporter of APNU/AFC and she said to me, "Mr. Odinga, I am disappointed in the budget. These men I voted for, run around the country whole year and was talking about the PPP/C discriminating against black people, I do not see anything fundamental in the budget to help black people." I said to her that we have to be balanced in this country. She said to me that she does not support what is happening in Wales because when you interfere with the sugar industry you are interfering with the survival of the Indian community. She said that just as when you interfered with Linden I did not like it, I do not want you to interfere with Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), because when you close an

estate you are threatening the livelihood of thousands of people, and in most cases those thousands of people are an ethnic type.

We need to move this country. We need to find solutions in this country so that all races can work together. We must not live in a society where it appears that one Government is for one race and one party is for another race.

I just want to close by saying that this year must be a watershed year for Guyana. This must be the year, regardless of our differences, we must find some mechanism so that we can work together for the development of this country, so we can put racial problems at the back of us and look forward as one united country.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are now at 7.30 p.m. We would take the suspension and return in half of an hour.

Sitting suspended at 7.33 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.07 p.m.

Mr. Trotman: I rise, as my colleagues before me, to make my contribution to the debate on Budget 2016 which is being presented under the theme, *Stimulating Growth, Restoring Confidence: The Good Life Beckons.* At the outset, let me joint with my colleagues in this National Assembly in first commending the visionary, the Hon. W.D. Jordan, Minister of Finance and his erudite team for presenting to this National Assembly with yet another budget of the coalition Government. It is a budget that speaks and responds to the aspirations of all Guyanese. If I may say, it is no small feat to produce two budgets in four months, between August and December, by my calculations, is four months. This effort of the Hon. Minister of Finance and his dedicated team cannot be understated nor its significance be allowed to pass unmentioned.

It was Winston Churchill who said, many years ago, that "continuous effort, not strength or intelligence, is the key to unlocking our potential." If I may use a topical analogy borrowed from American football, "it is like gaining yards towards the end zone until the touchdown is

achieved." This budget, coming months after the first presented, has gained yardage for the coalition Government and the people of Guyana.

Before I go into the presentation I prepared, allow me to respond to comments made by the Hon. Member Odinga Lumumba who has come back in. I have sat in this House for 18 continuous years and have listened to the Hon. Member Odinga Lumumba for many of those years. I can say, without fear of contradiction, that the presentation he made today is the same speech he has made every year. There is the usual attack on the PNC, Burnham, who chased away, who left the country. There is nothing new about it. The Hon. Member I can call a colleague and I can call a friend. I have tremendous respect for him.

There was something that has been jarring me throughout these debates and it is the constant reference by Members of the Opposition pointing to the Government about geriatrics. It jars me. Let me say that when I heard the Hon. Member Lumumba I think I got the point. We are okay over here; you have a problem over there. [**Mr. Ramson:** It is your own PNC man who said that.] With that said, you never bite the hand that feeds you. That is something that should be remembered. Your father would tell you that because he was in the PNC for some time. The Hon. Member Ramson's grandfather was the Assistant General Secretary for the People's National Congress. The People's National Congress would never forget him, I know, for the good work and labour he put in to keep the party strong.

Moving on, the Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba made some very good points which we would be taking into consideration. If I may say, I have written to him and we have started our discourse because he has brought some good contributions and points which we will be taking on board and I will get to them later in the presentation.

8.11 p.m.

With that said, I feel inspired to point out that the efforts of the second row, on the Government side, has been nothing but outstanding and at the risk of causing some disruption in the front, and unless some of my colleagues feel disrespected, I still have to say to them well done. I believe that they have done better than expected and they have done better than us here, if I may be allowed that. Thank you very much for your contributions.

The tenor of these debates has not been the best but certainly not the worst that have been witnessed in this House before. I believe, however, that there two fundamental matters that I wish to address, fundamental to good governance and to our inclusive and participatory governance and democracy. We were lectured yesterday about respect and disrespect. I feel it is my duty to point out some glaring examples, not just for the sake of saying this is an example of disrespect, but it is to ask the question: Are we to continue with the disrespect that we speak of?

It is time for change. There was disrespect shown when the Opposition was invited to be part of joint committees and then that invitation was met by refusal. In the past, whenever an invitation came from the Office of the President, the Opposition never failed to respond in the national interest to that invitation. We may not have always respected the personages or the persons we had to meet but we always respected the Office of the President, and always attended whenever invited to participate in talks.

In 1997, myself, a junior then, sat in a room for two and a half years with the Hon. Member Teixeira, Hon. Member, then as he was, Mr. Ramotar and Dr. Roger Luncheon in political dialogue. In 2001, there was constructive engagement. In 2006, we were invited back to the Office of the President and we met. We did not refuse to meet. There was disrespect shown in failing to honour the Herdmanston Accord process by not taking up seats on boards and commissions, as we agreed that the Opposition would always have a seat reserve for it at every board and committee.

Lastly, there was gross disrespect shown recently in this House when the Minister of Finance gave his address and budget presentation and the Leader of the Opposition chose to sit in the Members' lounge. He failed to sit here and listen to the Minister of Finance. Past Leaders of the Opposition, the Hon. Members Mr. Hoyte, Mr. Corbin and Mr. Granger never disrespected the Minister of Finance in the way that this disrespect was heaped on this Government. It never happened in the past.

This brings me to the second point, as we are discussing respect. Last night, again, we were lectured about religion and the use of references to scripture by Members on this side of the House. It may appear a simple matter, but to us it is a serious one. Guyana is indeed a secular

state and yet we have the good sense, of every day prayer, to give prayer to the Almighty God to guide us with our infinite wisdom.

Ms. Teixeira: Point of Oder, Mr. Speaker. I have no problem with the Hon. Member's view on religion but what I said in this House, and the *Hansard* would show it, is the use of one text in the budget speech and at the inauguration. I said nothing about Members of this House referring to speeches or quoting from the Bible. I talked about the official budget document that quotes from one text and I quoted from the inauguration, one text. Sir, I do not have a problem with people with their beliefs and quoting what they want, but I am saying at official functions then it is not…That is the point I was making. The Member is trying to make it appears as if I am trying to muzzle people's religious belief. It is not true.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you know the rules and you have tirelessly talked about your length of service here. You should, and I hasten to say, set an example in the manner which these things are done. I must ask you to do that. When you rise to speak, if you are rising on a Point of Order you know what you must do. If you are rising on a point of explanation you know what you must do. I say no more.

Ms. Teixeira: What is your ruling? I asked that the matter be corrected. I did not say the things the Hon. Member said. It is a point of elucidation, Standing Order 40 (b).

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member. It is a point of elucidation and not a Point of Order, as you have presented. Hon. Member, you have heard the statement presented by the Hon. Member, in elucidation.

Mr. Trotman: I have Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I would assume, having heard that, you would want to present your reaction to it.

Mr. Trotman: Yes Sir. Mr. Speaker, to borrow a line use quite successfully by the Minister of Foreign Affairs earlier, "*I throw meh corn but I ain't call anyone*." Mr. Speaker, I did not name anyone's name and so if, at all, anyone is offended I apologise. I named no one. I just said that we were told about persons making references, on this side of the House, to scriptures from one book and I called no name, Sir, with the greatest of respect. I am wise enough to know not to do so.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member.

Mr. Trotman: As stated, I said that whenever we start our proceeding in this House we invoke the presence of Almighty God in our prayers. Elsewhere, many of us attend functions, both official and unofficial, where prayers are said and we, ourselves, say those prayers and quote different verses of scriptures from various holy books. I have sat in admiration at the fluent way in which the Hon. Member Vindhya Persaud sometimes quotes from her holy book. Even in this debate alone, we have heard the Hon. Members Bishop Edghill, Dharamlall and Ramson quoted scripture quietly in their presentations. Much to my pleasant surprise, the Hon. Member Neendkumar cited a well-known passage from Psalms 118 which tells us, "to rejoice in the day that the Lord has made." It seems that we are about to have a revival in this House and it is good thing. I do believe that we have become too politically correct, too afraid to affirm our faith and to acknowledge that we have strong spiritual beliefs. I would hate to think that we can practise our religion in closets and be afraid to embrace it when in public. I say let us be like Daniel and throw open the windows and not hide our face.

In this hallowed House we are Christians, Hindus, Muslims and even some of us are agnostic and atheist, and that is our individual right. For a suggestion to come that same of us should not practise our faith, I believe it is a dangerous suggestion. We, on this side, are happy to know they are some over there as well who acknowledge that we are mere mortals… [***Interruption***] I have not called a name.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, the reference is that Members on this side of the House [*inaudible*]. No one said it in this side of the House [*inaudible*]. The point is that he is talking about this side of the House. No Member of said anything to challenge anybody… [*inaudible*] I am asking you Mr. Speaker, to please ask the Hon. Member to stop this. It is misrepresentation of what was said on this side of the House. I am begging you, Mr. Speaker, to please put a stop to this line of argument.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I thank you for your statement but please do not beg the Speaker for anything. The Speaker will do what you request of him as long as it is within the rules. I certainly would. Hon. Member please proceed.

Mr. Trotman: Grateful Sir. I was at the point of interruption making the point that we are mere mortals. We are not infallible neither we do consider ourselves, on this side of the House, to be immutable or invincible and so whenever we quote from scripture we are affirming our faith and acknowledging a higher authority over our lives and our decision making. That is our right. The Book of 2nd Samuel, chapter 23, verse 3 tells us, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." If - with the greatest of respect, this is just a hypothetical "if" - there is any amongst who reject the quoting of any scripture, whether it be from any holy books - the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita or the Koran - then they need to check themselves. I believe that there is delivery service held every night around the city. They may attend. Before I leave the subject, I wish only to state that even as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary I hope that we may gather as a nation and acknowledge our different religions and cultures and have a day of national prayer. That is my wish.

The focus of this year's budget as we have heard outlined by our able Minister of Finance and many colleagues before, who have spoken, have recognised some of the merits therein. It is about creating opportunities for our people. I wish to say that it is not only creating opportunities for our people, but for creating opportunities for all the people of Guyana, not just those who voted for this side, but all the people of Guyana wherever they are. Since we last met much has happened and much attention had been paid to redefining the scope and definition of natural resources themselves. In the past, administrators had naturally, and no pun intended, seen natural resources as tangible wealth that is to be exploited and earned from. However, with the "fresh approach", and in the context of the national patrimony, our resources are far more expansive than gold or diamond or logs and bauxite, but include as well air and water, health and well-being. In fact, the "good life" is both a natural and a national treasure. Interestingly the United Arab Emirates only earlier this week appointed a Minister of State with responsibility for happiness, recognising that overall well-being must be achieved correspondingly and contemporaneously with infrastructural and economic growth and that human resources and natural resources are symbiotically related.

In this regard the new Ministry of Natural Resources has set itself the mission:

> "To develop, implement and oversee policies for the sustainable development and utilisation of the natural resources whilst promoting the protection and conservation of the environment."

We carry this mission out in collaboration with all other Ministries and agencies of Government. There is much to celebrate, roads, bridges, clean communities, a cleaner city, higher pensions and better health care to name a few. [**Mr. Ramson:** Higher ministerial salaries too.] Yes, and higher salaries for you too. For our part, we have to joyous reasons in the Ministry to celebrate. The first is that we do have the formation of a Ministry of Natural Resources and, secondly, we celebrate, and perhaps we can say the augmentation and enrichment of the Ministry with the addition of the illustrious and dynamic Hon. Simona Broomes, Minister within the Ministry.

Time does not permit me to cover every facet of the manifold activities of the Ministry. I will give an overview of our upcoming plans and programmes.

The Ministry, in continuing the expansion and sustainability of the natural resources and environmental sectors, has commenced a series of critical initiatives to improve management and coordination of these sectors in the short and medium terms. This is in keeping with the commitment to have a more inclusive and collaborative working relationship with the various associations and other stakeholders, and to continue building achievements emanating from the natural resources and environmental sectors. We are presently instilling, within the various sectoral agencies, the GGMC, the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), the Environmental Protection Agency, (EPA), EAB, the Protected Areas Commission and the Guyana Gold Board, and including the Wildlife Management Authority, the concept of the one team approach, so that the patrimonial canopy can be extended over all of them and the expected synergies can be realised.

I believe that it would be appropriate to say that the inclusivity, we speak of, includes the Opposition as well and to remind the Members that there is always a space at the table set and waiting for them to join us.

8.26 p.m.

If I may be allowed to share some highlights on 2015, it is oil and gas. Between July and December, the department, as it then was, in the area of oil and gas, was able to create a draft to upstream oil and gas policy, which will be presented to Cabinet within another month or there about. There were also two workshops on the Sovereign Wealth Fund, in conjunction and with the kind gesture of the Canadian High Commission and the University of Calvary in Canada. We have as well increased activity and interest in both offshore and onshore blocks for drilling and exploring of oil.

In the area of mining, we have continued, and our discussions are now about to implement a mainstream bio-diversity project with the United Nations Development Fund. We are implementing the roadmap for the eradication of the use of mercury in mining, in keeping with the Minamata Convention on mercury. As it is well known, we have established an Anti–gold Smuggling Task Force. We heard that there was gold smuggling task force, so we thought we would establish an Anti–gold Smuggling Task Force. That task force is actually working well. We have reopened, with great success the Bartica Gold Board office and are looking to open a few more. Our crowning glory came at the end of the year when we declared 451,490 ounces of gold, surpassing the target of 381,000 that was set. That declaration gave the nation over half a billion of US dollars of revenue.

In the area of wildlife management, we have completed and submitted to the committee, headed by the Hon. Prime Minister, to review legislation of our draft Wildlife Authority Bill, which will be presented immediately after the budget debates are over. The zoo regulations are also to be laid. We have as well, in the area of the environment, successfully participated in the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Conference of Parties (COP) 21 Conference in Paris France. It was a defining year for us. The agreement has been hailed by all as the most ambitious international environment agreement in history. Guyana was honoured to have participated in its formation. Despite the doubting Thomases, Guyana and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) accomplished most of what was sought to be achieved in the Paris Agreement. In moving forward, and as a demonstration of Government's continued commitment to addressing climate change, Guyana will ratify the Paris Agreement when the United Nations' General Secretary holds a high level signing ceremony in April of this year.

Lastly, we were able at the end of December, 2015 to pass regulations to restrict the importation of styrofoam products in keeping with our drive for a green and clean economy. Later in this year we will be addressing ways of better managing plastics and other non-degradables.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of forestry we continue negotiations with the European Union (EU)with the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), which is a governance mechanism for the forestry sector. Currently, there is a team from Brussels in the country. There is a fourth round of negotiations, which will continue in March. We have, as well, done very extensive work in stemming the wild and wanton cutting and export of Guyana's logs at the expense of the value-added development as contained in the various investment development agreements, which were being breached.

Governance in the natural resources sector: We are actively taking steps to take up membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Guyana has already hosted two workshops, and a team is readying to attend the seventh summit of the EITI in Lima, Peru, later in this month. In accompanying, Hon. Prime Minister in Mexico City, in November, Guyana also participated in the Open Government Partnership Summit held in Mexico City where the whole issue of transparency and accountability in the extractive industries sector was dealt with. Guyana has committed to taking up membership there as well.

We are proud to say that on the invitation received by the Hon. Member Odinga Lumumba, Chairman of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee Natural Resources Committee, the Ministry also appeared towards the end of 2015 before that Committee and was able to interact and to answer questions. Indeed, it is to start what is going to be, hopefully, a good, long and healthy relationship between the Ministry and the Parliament going forward.

It is if I may say a few words about gold, I heard the Hon. Member Nandlall, speaking about gold, earlier. The world market prices for all commodities are down, but as of this week, and over the last two, but more so this week, we have seen favourable rises in the price of gold where earlier in the week the price went up to US$1,200, and if I may quote from a publication called *The Week*, which favourably reported as follows:

> "The trajectory over recent weeks is quite clear and that is from a near seven year low around US$1000, back in December, gold has been setting higher peaks and shallower thrusts"

The Minister of Finance, has already signalled that this year gold production is expected to, again, do the heavy lifting by providing a minimum of 550,000 ounces of gold to the national effort, an increase of 22% over 2015 production. I can safely report that the miners, the representatives the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association, the Guyana Women's Miners Organisation and the large gold mining companies have assured the Government that they will meet the target set by the Hon. Minister of Finance.

In the area of bauxite, because of challenges in Asia, it underperformed but the two companies operating RUSAL, or the BCGI, Bauxite Company of Guyana Inc., and Bosai, both were able to turn a small profit and to hold their own against a difficult market. The forecast for the next decade, however, is positive, as it is expected that bauxite projects worldwide will have to be enhanced and developed to supply alumina capacity growth in China, the Middle East and India. It augurs well for our industry. The two companies are currently operating and holding their own. There is a third, First Bauxite Inc., which is preparing as soon as the market, does a bit better to enter into production.

This year, I will announce, and am announcing now, that the Government will move to implement its manifesto's commitment to ensure that a high level technical team is put together to development plans to examine the possibility of an international scale alumina refinery in Linden, Region 10. As always, the Opposition will be invited to participate in this exercise and I hope the Members patriotism will not wane to a point where they say no to this invitation, as well.

In the area of forestry, production this year was 550,000 metric cubic metres with an export value of $54 million. It was lower than previous years but, as I said, there was too much export of raw logs and less value-added, and this is why there was a reflection or a drop in exports. We will continue to work along with the international community to enhance our capabilities in this regard.

For the benefit of those here and those who may be listening, I would just like to give some figures and statistics for the month of January, 2016. Gold, we have already collected 35,000 ounces of gold for the month of January. This tells us that, if we are to extrapolate, we are well on our way to meeting our target if we maintain the 35,000 mark per month. As well, 3,119 metric carats of diamonds have been produced; 109,000 tons of bauxite has been mined by BCGI, which is RUSAL. We have mined 135,000 tons of stone and 3,300 tons of sand. That is for the month of January, 2016.

As I said, we will continue this year to discharge our responsibilities and to manage as best as we can. I would take the opportunity to address an issue which has been coming up and which I dare say will rear its head next week, and that is the staffing details at the Ministry of Natural Resources. At present, there are 56 staff mentioned in line item 6116, contracted employees, but I wish to state that 31 of them are scholarship recipients who we inherited. I do have their contracts with me. It would appear that persons going on scholarships to Cuba and to the University of Guyana, in the areas and the natural resources sector, Mining Engineering, Forestry, the Environment, the Government of Guyana is mandated to give them employment. The letter would come from the Public Service Ministry, and we are told that we have to absorb them. In that regard, there are 22 such persons as Forest Engineers and Rangers at the Guyana Forestry Commission, five Meteorological Engineers at the GGMC, nine such staff members, Environmental Officers at the EPA and the head office, which is the Ministry itself, only has 20 employees.

The Minister of Finance has been good enough this year to give us $746 million-plus dollars to implement our environmental management policies, which cover Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks Commission, the Protected Areas Commission, which encompasses the Kanuku Mountain Range in Region 9, the Shell Beach Reserve in Region 1 and the Kaieteur National Park. This is where moneys will be spent. With this allocation in place, we move closer to revealing a Guyana that is discernibly more environmentally responsible. If I may pause, to say that the Government is currently in negotiations with the Aurora Goldfields to create what is known as an offset because of it having to go on the international market for financing for its project. It has to provide an offset for the environmental damage that is caused by its mining, and so, Government has identified the Kaieteur National Park to be the recipient of that offset. We

are proud to say that we intend to have that in place before April of this year. I would like to report as well that the protected areas system continues to be strengthened. There is a loan with the Government of Germany which is being drawn down on. This year, Government has set aside an extra $5 million – thank you - in the budget to take care of furniture, equipment, radios and two satellite phones which will be …

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have four minutes more.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given five additional minutes as an extension to his minutes allotted.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Trotman: I may return to the issue of the national forest policy. In 2016, the Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to update and rationalise policies and laws relating to the conservation management protection and sustainable development of the nation's patrimony in its forest resources. In light of the changes in Guyana's economic, social and political landscape over the past five years, since the previous policy was crafted, we feel that it is imperative that we put a new one in place. Much to our horror, we discovered, on assuming office, that when asked the question about total production forest areas available in Guyana, all, 100%, have been given out. It is unimaginable. This is what a former Head of State would have referred to as confounded nonsense. How could a responsible Government proceed over the allocation of all, not some, of its productive forest? What about future generations? Are they not entitled to share in the patrimony of the forest? In the context of the national patrimony, this is a threat to our long-term viability and to our security as a people. Understandably, in the national interest the Government will have to do and will be doing something about it.

Only last evening Hon. Member Ms. Hastings quite competently spoke about efforts to have water resource management brought to the front burner. The Ministry of Natural Resources is going to collaborate with the Ministry of Communities to play its part to ensure that that is a success.

I turn quickly to oil and gas. As we know, on or about the 8th May, last year, it was disclosed that a significant, what is described as a significant, find of hydrocarbons was made off the coast of Guyana.

8.41 p.m.

ExxonMobil having made that find will be aggressively, this year starting, in fact this weekend, begin further explorations and the surveying of the sub-surface sea bed and the sea-bed itself and below, to see the extent, scope and depth of that find. We are pleased to say that this has already started to give a boost, small as it is for now, to our economy. There are also heightened activities with helicopters flying and forth. Perhaps, at an appropriate time, we will have the Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee visit the rig so that he may see for himself what is happening.

The Minister of Finance has already spoken about the Sovereign Wealth Fund and its importance. We recognise the statements made by the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba. The Government is moving to put in place the Fund, not just for oil and gas, but for all resources, such as, water, forest, sand, stone, diamonds and gold so that future generations, 100 and 200 years from now, will be able to benefit from these resources.

If I may go to my conclusion, just to say that this is the Year of Renaissance. It is a momentous year of the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. If I could reveal, it was also the year in which I was born.

Budget 2016 is anchored innovation that every Guyanese must enjoy the ‘good life’, and it represents the beginning of the fulfilment of that promise made by the coalition Government towards transforming our national economy and ensuring a ‘good life’ for all Guyanese. The Natural Resources Sector is one that is growing and very critical and central to economic growth and fostering social stability. The contribution of the sector to our economy is expanding, and with Budget 2016, this sector undoubtedly will continue to perform with resilience, through environmental and economic sustainability.

We must, move and I quote a Biblical phrase again. I hope that it is not too annoying. It is one used frequently by my brother, the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan:

> "We must move from being hues of wood and draws of water and move to becoming the producers of value added products from oil, gas, gold and diamonds".

There are few areas as important as the issue of the National Patrimony and the management of the natural resources that have been bequeathed to us by the Almighty God. It is axiomatic that we must work together. It is what makes sense. Incidentally, the offer for the Opposition to be represented on boards will remain open, but they must realise that, with each passing day, they, and not us, are closing the door on cohesion and on nation-building, thereby, excluding themselves from enjoying the benefits of the 'good life'.

The Persian Stage of the Middle Age - Omar Khayyam puts it best, he says:

> "The moving finger writes; and, having writ, moves on:"

Your time is going to come and pass, if you allow it to go. In the meantime, we will take up the mantle of responsibility and discharge our duties to the best of our abilities, whilst they on the other side come to terms with the new political realities that they are faced with.

We pray for God's strength, for guidance and covering over the President and Parliament of Guyana, and over all of Guyana's people, as we excitedly and expectantly enter into an unprecedented era of renaissance, restoration and revival.

Mr. Speaker, this 2016 Budget speaks boldly to us. It is stimulating growth socially, economically, infrastructurally, democratically, and even spiritually; it is restoring our confidence, both in ourselves and in our beloved country; it is loudly beckoning to us hail the 'good life'; "he that has ears to hear let him hear". May God bless us all. I thank you. *[Applause]*

Minister of Citizenship [Mr. Felix]: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Worthy and most Hon. Members of this House, I rise to support a Budget which was proposed to this House by the Hon. Minister of Finance to the tune of some $230 billion to propel Guyana's development and to ensure that Guyanese enjoy a better life, which eluded us over the past 23 years.

Permit me to observe the attitude to this Budget by the many speakers of the Opposition. They would have us believe that their work initiated the economic growth-rate, which the PPP/C

Government experienced. Not so! In fact, it was the 1985 – 1992 stewardship of the economic affairs of this country, by the Hon. Carl Barrington Greenidge, and his astute management of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) which gave birth to a positive growth of 7%. Now, the PPP/C, having experienced a growth of 4%, the PPP MPs now boasts about their growth rate without looking back with gratitude from where it originated.

The Opposition now behaves as though the PPP/C is still in Government. We will not be deterred by their posture, but will follow the path to a glorious future created by the expert guidance of our Minister of Finance.

This Budget, which is entitled *Stimulating Growth, Restoring Confidence: The Good Life Beckons*, is an example of our Government's recognition that there was some growth, which must be stimulated to give confidence to all Guyanese as they work, that a 'good life' awaits them.

That could not have been our experience in the recent past since the stewardship of the previous Government ensured that crime ate away at our fabric, like the cancer in the human body. It was robbery after robbery; it was piracy after piracy. The Government seemed incapable of reigning in the criminal situation. It is true that crime seem to have been out of control in the hands of the PPP/C.

The Hon. Member Anamayah, spoke of crime as though crime was a phenomenon in our Government, but we have inherited it from the PPP/C. This Budget is designed to ensure that the Guyana Police Force (GPF) is resourced and delivers upon its mandate to protect our citizens, and to prevent and detect crime.

Not so long ago, in our position over there, we had to be goading this Government to reign in the excesses of the police. Thank God that in nine months we have not seen any evidence of any behaviour which suggests that policemen will burn genitals, burn hands, and use batons on persons in custody. In any event, the police now seem to be on a path where they are solving crimes.

I support the ban on used tyres. It is the coalition's way of ensuring the safety of its citizens. We recognise a frugal spending, but we will not encourage frugal spending which would lead our

citizens to a death trap – which is what the used tyres hold in store for Guyanese citizens. I am aware that the countries from where used tyres are imported have strict laws which prohibit the use of tyres on motor vehicles and which do not have a certain thread thickness. That is why they are made used tyres, and we buy them. These tyres become unsafe for use on the roads of those countries and they must be replaced, and they are unsafe here too. Therefore, as leaders we must protect our citizens.

The Opposition has been criticising the Government for returning unspent money to the Treasury. To the Opposition, I say, thank you for the publicity which now informs the public that this Government will deal honestly with their moneys without the need for Commissions of Inquiries to find out what was done with it.

Similarly, they claim that the cost of renewing a firearm licence is too expensive. These licences have not been increased in years and the current increases are well within the range of their holders. The people who apply for firearms or handgun licences are the ones who claim that they move around the country with large sums of moneys. What is wrong with paying a few dollars more?

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn to my department, but before doing so, let me congratulate the Hon. Winston Dacosta Jordan for crafting an excellent Budget, which takes into consideration every aspect of our developmental needs.

This coalition Government will give reality to the enjoyment of a glorious future for all Guyanese. The Department of Citizenship will play its role which transcends all the productive sectors of this Government. The Department of Citizenship plays an essential role in relation to the work of the Ministries of Public Telecommunications, Natural Resources, Agriculture, Public Infrastructure, Public Health, the Guyana Forestry Commission and its immigration service. The Department must perform with a high degree of efficiency, to ensure that visitors and persons pursuing business in Guyana would be allowed to do so with systems and procedures to facilitate free and easy entry and movement in Guyana, void of delays and frustrations, which are all regular experiences of the recent past.

The Department of Citizenship offer services to citizens and foreigners such as: visas for visitors, students, employment and business to allow for business development and the enjoyment of the tourism product.

Visas issued were as follows: for 2014 – 1473; for 2015 – 1171; during January, 2016, the Department issued 445 visas to various foreigners seeking to enter Guyana for different reasons.

The Department is responsible for the naturalisation of persons residing in Guyana and satisfying the residency requirements, and the registering of persons as citizens by birth and by marriage,

During 2015, 94 foreign nationals from 15 countries were registered as citizens in Guyana, while 18 foreign nationals were made citizens through naturalisation.

8.56 p.m.

Our immigration service has to be particularly vigilant as visitors seek to enter our country and remain here outside the confines of the law. As soon as this APNU/AFC Government came into Office, there arose the need to clamp down on persons who arrived at our airport without the standard entry requirements, recognised and implemented in countries around the world, and this form of enforcement continues to this day. Apparently, the tacit approval of those in power, a year and more ago, had turned a blind eye to immigration abuses. This coalition Government is now putting right. Every nation and every country has rules and laws that control and regulate people who come from other places.

Unrecorded Immigrants attract abuses primarily because they are illegal, having arrived in this country without satisfying the entry requirements or they were allowed entry because of deception using forged documents. We must be alive to consequences which would naturally flow from unrecorded immigrants. The result is the abominable crime of human trafficking.

Many of the illegal immigrants end up in very dangerous situations, as they do not have proper documents to secure jobs, and as a consequence, they end up in unfortunate situations. The flow of illegal immigrants to Guyana is the result of the pull factor in certain developed countries, but stringent checks at certain ports have forced these illegal immigrants from those countries to use Guyana as a transit point. Unfortunately, quite a number remain in this country.

Guyana is an open country; it welcomes all visitors and has landed many who have not been traced to have left the country legally. Our checks revealed that over 5300 illegal immigrants remain unaccounted for in Guyana. These are undocumented immigrants who live in Guyana without permission and the Government has only their entry records. They were legally here, but are now illegal because they have overstayed their time. In any country, undocumented and illegal immigrants are a source additional pressure on the resources of Government as they utilise services such as health and education and pay no taxes. Therefore, the law must be enforced against them.

Illegal immigrants contribute to the dark figure of crime, which are unreported crimes, because of their status. This APNU/AFC Government will not relent in its effort to be vigilant at its ports and to track down those who are in Guyana illegally.

Even in this effort, pressure would be placed on the Immigration Department to build up and devote additional manpower, specifically to trace illegals. For January 2016, 26,736 persons were landed at all ports in Guyana; 53 Guyanese nationals were deported from seven countries; 40 persons were deported for immigration related issues; while 13 persons were deported for their alleged involvement in criminal matter; forty three Guyanese nationals were refused entry in the Caribbean.

Passports - soon after taking Office in 2015, the coalition Government, in response to persistent pleas from the diaspora for the speedy processing of their passports, their issues were resolved when this new Government moved to reduce the three-month waiting time to acquire a new passport overseas. Once passports arrived from the diaspora, they are processed in Guyana within five days and are returned to their destinations. I am sure that these passports are returned to their respective owners within one month, removing two months of unnecessary waiting.

During 2015, the Central Immigration and Passport Office at Eve Leary processed 89,136 passports for local use, and 14,606 passports were processed for Guyanese in the diaspora. For January, 2016, 8059 passports were prepared for local use, while 1140 passports were prepared for the diaspora.

Initiatives are under consideration for early implementation, which includes decentralisation of the application and issuance of passports. This Government is in the mood to take services to the

people. The crowds, long lines, and cramped spaces at the Central Immigration and Passport Office, on Camp Road, Eve Leary is an intolerable situation this Government inherited and every effort will be made to take the service to outlying areas and to draw on the power of information technology, particularly where the E-governance project exists.

To promote a project, which facilitates the public making applications for passports online, I am aware of the procedural challenges likely to impede implementation of this project, but in the test phase, corrections and adjustments would guide the project to perfection. Running side by side with this project, there is another initiative which will permit the replacement of machine readable passports, wherever they are in Guyana. Currently, under review, is the reintroduction of the 64-page passports since the current 32-page passport seems inadequate for frequent travellers. These measures intend to relieve the public of poor services, time wasting and to replace the discomforts with a more user-friendly service, befitting this 21st century.

Birth Certificates – this is a basic and an essential document of identity and it should be issued either at birth or as soon as possible thereafter, so that children can receive health and education services. In this regard, Guyana has been pursuing 100% birth registration, which is an international standard intended to ensure that children are documented. In furtherance of our desire to have every child registered, the Department has partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to visit the hinterland and riverine communities to discover and register children. During the last week ending 6th February, 2016, sections of Region 1, Barima/Waini, was visited by staff from the Department. That visit was very successful based on the number of registrations done, over 200. Another region will be visited in the new week.

There is a proposal in this year's Budget to digitise the records at the General Register's Office (GRO). This project was tendered, but would be retendered because of the need to remove certain flaws. As a consequence of the digitisation, huge amounts of data would be stored electronically leading to printed rather than written birth, death, and marriage certificates.

We will continue to ensure that children receive the protection they need from the State against abuses, and eventually attain and maintain 100% birth registration. The areas that are outlined above are just the known and established areas in which the Department functions. On 14th January, 2016, in his address to the National Assembly, His Excellency, President David

Granger, set out other areas in which the Department must play a role. He identified the global terrorist threats and transnational crimes to confront migration and trafficking in persons, as a result of a multi-sectorial approach to these issues.

It is not intended that the Department of Citizenship takes over the job of these agencies, but the intention is to have us play a back-up role to detect and discover the misuse of our country by those who perpetrate transnational crimes or are somewhere involved in terrorist activities. This year, the Budget proposed by our Minister of Finance has adequately catered for this Department's role in ensuring that we move to provide the services which the Guyanese and the wider public need; to ensure that immigration issues are properly dealt with; and that we ensure that our country is not being abused by those who traffic in persons and commit other crimes.

The time is now ripe for all the talk about cooperation and collaboration, and for those on the other side of the House, to work with us and to ensure that we make Guyana what our motto says - *One people, one nation and one destiny*. In this regard, I ask that we all support Mr. Winston Dacosta Jordan in proposing his Budget for approval in this National Assembly. [*Applause*]

Mr. Rohee: I welcome this opportunity on behalf of the People Progressive Party to speak to this Budget Presentation by the Hon. Minister of Finance. Before I go to the heart of the matter, I have to say that the persistent references that I have heard from the Government benches in respect of – "Working together; that you did not do it when you were there for 23 years; you had so much time to do it, why did you not do it". All of these platitudes, placed to the context of the existing political situation, are meaningless and worthless.

I would even go on to say that, a lot of talk had also been made in respect to beautification. Who would be against beautification? Who would be against of *nicing-up* our own beautiful Georgetown? The problem is however, one cannot eat beautification. Beautification does not put money in our pockets. It puts money in other people's pockets who may have gotten the contracts to hire people to do so. This romanticism and deification of beatification is something that we need to be a little judicious about.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman, made reference to what he described as the disrespect on the path of the Opposition Leader. I would like to say from the very outset that, Mr. Trotman's words does not match the antecedents which have occurred in this National Assembly.

9.11 p.m.

I have sat in this National Assembly for years and I have seen the respect by my Colleagues, who were on that side of the House for some time, given to past Presidents, including Mr. Hoyte; other Oppositions Leaders, including Mr. Granger and Mr. Corbin. There was not a single heckle of these distinguish gentlemen when they spoke, incidentally, when they spoke in wrapping up for the Opposition benches on the budget debates. What we have now is a glowing departure from that convention. If we want to talk about respect and disrespect, we have to put it in that historical context. Our Opposition Leader has been denied, perpetually, the right that was given to previous Opposition Leaders in this honourable House.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, the Minister of Finance, have been presented and described in many ways by his Colleagues and they have a right to do so, after all, he is their Colleague, and they are his Colleagues. But what floored me was when someone went totally overboard in describing the distinguish Minister of Finance as a genius. The word “genius” is a very treasured word and ought not to be dispensed whimsically. I want to welcome the Hon. Minister of Finance into the gallery of accidental geniuses.

I have discerned, in the course of this debate, with a certain degree of puzzlement and amazement, if not bewilderment, of statements emanating from the eastern wing of this House that are somewhat bizarre. For example, it would suffice to say that, we were told that only under the APNU/AFC Government could the working class enjoy a ‘good life’. But how can this be, when it is with a gross contradiction to the realities of everyday life in this country. More than 3,000 rice farmers cannot say what their future will be in this so called ‘good life’. They are totally devastated. How can we say that we can rejoice today and be glad, when thousands of sugar workers are at a lost to know what the future holds for them? How could they say to whom the ‘good life’ is beckoning, when hundreds are being witch-hunted out of jobs and are now, as they say in Guyanese parlance, *kicking bricks in hard guava season*.

This situation is grim and irrespective of the gross and rosy picture that might be painted in this honourable House by those who sit on the Government benches, it is in stark contradiction to the realities of Guyanese society. I want to submit that, what they are describing, is tantamount to a surreal situation. That is what we are living and that is what they are pretending to be living. As

the famous song sang by Swamp Dog says: "It is a synthetic world we are living in"; it is a synthetic world that is being painted.

What we have in Guyana is a political party called the PPP fresh out of Government, after 23 years, with, in fact, a wealth of experience, both at the national and international levels. But what have they done, notwithstanding their called for unity? They have totally dismissed 23 long years of governmental experience; an economy that has grown exponentially; and for them it is worth nothing. That is precisely why they will find governing, as we did at the beginning, a very difficult sisyphus task. It will be difficult. Notwithstanding their reluctance to admit the difficulties that we know they are encountering because we have been there and we have done that. So they can paint the rosiest picture that they want to paint, there are many experienced persons on this side of the House who know different.

They chose to throw all of this away, and in the same breath they come to us and talk about the need for national unity and social cohesion. How on earth could you speak about national unity and social cohesion and you dispense with a party, that had been in Government for 23 years, as though it was nothing. We are hearing all these quantum leaps, backward and forward, creating a tremendous gap in the history of this country, as though the PPP/Civic never existed. There was no Government lead by former Presidents of this country.

We do not have a problem, it is okay for them to dismiss the 23 years of the PPP/C. It is quite okay for them to say that we do know have intellectual property rights on the budgets that still symbolises or are symbols of the PPP/Civic reign in office. We do not have a problem with that. The problem is that you cannot wish it away, it is there. When the Hon. Prime Minister travels to Essequibo, which boat does he travel on with his entourage and his retinue? That is a symbol of the rule of the People's Progressive Party/Civic.

Yet, they have the gumption to come to us and talk to us about the need for social cohesion and national unity. We do not need to defend our track records on social cohesion and national unity. The historical records speak for itself. They are riding on the crest of the accomplishments of the PPP/Civic's economic policy. They are riding on the crest of the economic developmental polices of the PPP/Civic. How can they, in nine months, construct this monumental mirage, which some have an optical illusion of, created by the APNU/AFC? It is impossible. One cannot

in any way, create in eight months, what this Government is seeking to make people believe. It cannot happen. They cannot create in eight months what the PPP/C has created in 23 years. That is ridiculous.

I want to say that, apart from riding on the crest of the PPP's accomplishments, they are traversing the worn and beaten path of corruption. And, I want to warn the Members on this side of the House that, at some point in time, they will run out of gaff on corruption. They will run out of gaff on this corruption 'hobby horse' and they will have to find something else to speak about.

The sweet taste of victory is already turning bitter. We know what it is all about. Do not believe that we are living in an ivory tower. They keep looking back, but I want to warn them that, if they keep looking back, like Lot's Biblical wife, we know that they will turn into a pillar of salt.

I have read the two documents. I have read the Minister's speeches of 2015 and 2016 and I have made the comparative analysis. In the speech that he has made in respect to the security sector and the public safety, there are three goals: Reducing crime; rebuilding public trust; and reforming the public security system. For 2015 and 2016, they have reduced it to two goals. What are those two goals? Safeguarding public security and rebuilding public trust. Are we to assume that they have accomplished the previous goals, and as a result of accomplishing those, they are now reduced to two goals.

I want to say that, almost each and every one of the programmes that they are now pursuing in the security sector had its genesis in the PPP/Civic Administration. There is no way in eight months - someone said that you could fool some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time - they would have to do like what Jesus Christ did at the sea of Galilee and I doubt whether they can do that. But I am saying that there is no way in eight months they could create those programmes in the security sector.

I am submitting, as I did before, talking about crime and exerting efforts to fight crime is only one part of the picture and I know what the difficulties are. There is no way that Mr. Ramjattan can lecture me on the difficulties of the security sector - no way. I am saying to my Colleague that, unless you get the cooperation of the ministries in the social sector, you will not succeed.

That is the most difficult task because most of the Ministers in the social sector do not want to go in that particular arena.

So I want to say that, what we have seen in the speech, it is a regurgitation. I have looked at it and compared it, and Mr. Jordan knows what I am talking about. He knows how budget speeches are prepared; he has been there. When one looks at the two presentations, one has four paragraphs and one has three paragraphs.

9.26 p.m.

There are four paragraphs in the 2015 speech and there are three paragraphs in the 2016 speech but it is the *same old same old.*

In the 2015 speech, a lot of emphasis was placed on the Citizens' Security Programme 2 (CSP2). In this Budget, the Hon. Member puts less emphasis on that and more emphasis on the goodies the Government intends to bring to the Guyana Police Force and the other security forces. I am saying that the focus has narrowed. Unless this matter is placed in the context of the totality, a holistic approach, I am sorry but the country would never succeed in addressing the security issue. It is like running on the spot.

We were told that a national security plan was being developed. A special meeting was held with some leading lights in the Government to develop a national security plan in a draft. What has happened subsequently? We were told that the document went from the Ministry of the Presidency to the Ministry of Public Security then to the Commissioner of Police, and all this time it was being tweaked, *weaked*, leaked, *jeaped*. We do not know. In the end, nothing resulted. What we heard or read about was that Operation Dragnet has consummated the national security plan. There is no need for a national security strategy anymore. It is a waste of time because it is now consummated in the Operation Dragnet which we are told will attack the four big areas, and, incidentally, local government elections is one of the areas being targeted in the security plan.

I want to move very quickly. We heard of issues that were inherited and needed fixing. I want to suggest to the distinguished Members, on the Government benches, that there is a store on Main Street called Fix-It. There are some very beautiful tools in there for those who do not have

toolkits, and I am not referring to anyone's virility. To those who need toolkits to do fix-it jobs, I suggest they go there.

In the Budget speech, nothing was heard about the fight against drugs. One leading light in the Government, when in Opposition, mentioned time and time again, to this nation, that the economy was driven by drugs. Well, in eight months, it has stopped; it is no more; the drugs have disappeared; the drug peddlers are no longer there and all of that has dried up in eight months. The economy is not being driven, anymore, by drugs and the drug trade. What is even more surprising and laughable, although we welcome it, is that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is here but the drug economy is no longer here. Why? It is because there has been a [*inaudible*] and a new Government is there. Therefore, all the evils that were there when the PPP/C was in Government are no longer there. Glory Hallelujah! They are no longer there.

I am asking the Hon. Minister, where is the national drug strategy master plan which a leading light, when in Opposition, kept harping on the need to implement? It is no longer there. Is the DEA and is Operation Dragnet part of the national drug strategy master plan? I am telling you that if a national drug strategy master plan is being formulated and the players, whether external or internal, are not part of that strategy, you will end up in the trouble which we were envisaging in light of this situation.

We heard about the four horsemen hindering our country's development. There are not four horsemen; it is one horseman because the four areas that were mentioned are all social. So there is one horse in the social area. You better watch out for the other two horsemen – the economic and the political. If we do not address the economic and the political and only deal with the one horseman, you will be overtaken by the time you reach the tape. I mentioned that as something that the Hon. Members need to pay attention to.

In the speech, there was no reference to human security and human security is the basis on which all other aspects of security are built up in this country.

We have heard about the upgrading of the passports by my good Friend, Mr. Winston Felix, a former Commissioner of Police, and I know the police quite well; they are good at making things look nice. Mr. Felix mentioned a 64-page passport but he did not mention what it will cost for

the ordinary Guyanese to purchase a 64-page machine readable passport. I know what it will cost because we were in Government and saw what the cost was and found that it was too exorbitant for the ordinary traveller. It will have a tremendous cost.

In addition to that, I did not hear the Hon. Member, Mr. Felix, mention, which he did last year, the procurement of two pieces of equipment but there is money, in the Budget, again, for the same equipment. They were going to procure two pieces of equipment to upgrade the production of the current machine readable passports. By the way, before the PPP/C left Government, a fresh set of new machine readable passports, with enhanced security features, were already ordered and paid for. We have not heard anything about them. There was supposed to be a phasing out of the current passports and the bringing on stream of the new passports with the enhanced security features. We hope that that money has not gone wasted. Two pieces of equipment were to be procured: one to upgrade the equipment and the other to produce passports in the various regions. I have read an interview with Mr. Felix, recently, where he regretted that this could not have been in place, that they need to have a building and that they had limitations and so forth. Interestingly, and quite cleverly, he did not mention anything about that.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have four minutes remaining.

Mr. Ali: I rise to request the agreed additional five minutes for the Hon. Member.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Rohee: I looked for the vision. What did I find? The vision comprises three components: one, the British Security Sector Reform Action Plan (SSRAP); two, the draft security plan which we never saw; and three, Operation Dragnet. That is the vision. How on earth can a vision comprise a security plan that is going to be crafted in London and brought to Guyana, a security plan that was never a kind of childbirth and Operation Dragnet, which is an operation that has not been put into any context whatsoever? Therefore, there is no vision whatsoever.

We were told that a command centre, at a cost of $2.15 million would have been established last year. Nothing has been heard about it. Where does the command centre exist? Where has it been set up? How is it being staffed?

There were also supposed to be sweeps in the Interior location and the *Kayamoo,* the prostitution and the gun smuggling were supposed to be dealt with. We, on this side of the House, would like to know how many sweeps have taken place since the announcement was made. How much harvest has been reaped as a result of these sweeps that took place in the Interior? We would also like to know what has happened with the impact report on the 2.00 a.m. curfew. The Minister of Tourism had announced, publicly, that an impact assessment study had been commissioned to examine the merits and demerits of the 2.00 a.m. curfew. Is this a turf facing question? Is it a question of ministerial turf? Is it a question that the matter has been caught up in the politics of Cabinet? If it is so, I believe we ought to know.

We heard that every street in the City was to have Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras and moneys were allocated for that in the Budget last year. Where are the cameras? Who got the contracts to establish the cameras around the city? We do not know.

We also heard that there is a Presidential Advisor on National Security who has been going around to different police stations, which the Minister should be doing, and was supposed to present a report in August, last year, to the Ministry of the Presidency. I do not want to call his name because he is not here and there might be an objection to say, "Why call his name if he is not here to defend himself?" But I think the Hon. Member knows who I am speaking about. Where is the document that the Presidential Advisor on National Security was supposed to present, in August of last year, to assist the Minister and the Government, as a whole, in dealing with these questions? What we have are people trampling all over the Ministry of Public Security and the Minister probably needs a dose of Viagra, Tisane de Durbon, Nutrophos or Phosphorine. We are not seeing or hearing the Minister on these issues. Other than that, we are hearing of people who are walking here and walking there and the next thing we will hear is that they are walking all over [*inaudible*]. "These boots are made for walking."

Mr. Speaker, I want to wind up now.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have four minutes remaining.

Mr. Rohee: We heard that there was an investigation into the taking of bribes on the Corentyne, where a truck with $6 million worth of cash and drugs was allowed to pass. No one has been interdicted, as far as we are aware, but the Hon. Minister did say that he will commission an

inquiry into that incident. Nothing was heard, so far, on this matter and, in the same breath, the Minister is saying that he will root out corruption in the Guyana Police Force.

9.41 p.m.

We would like to find out, from the Hon. Minister, how many corrupt cops he has rooted out so far from the Guyana Police Force. We would like to know that because he waged, and is still waging, I understand, a campaign to deal with corruption in the Police Force. I think it is important for the nation to hear how many of these persons he has rooted out from corrupt practices in the Police Force. He must tell us that. It is not only good enough for [*inaudible*] he has to tell us the results.

Incidentally, there is one other thing: before I left the Ministry of Home Affairs in the last Government, we commissioned a floating police base.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have two minutes remaining.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you.

I have seen this floating police base moving backwards and forwards and I suspect, Mr. Harmon, Hon. Minister, that there is some element of skulduggery going on there because three cheques were cut: $49 million to build the floating base by Courtney Benn and $16.4 to purchase the equipment for the boat. Twice cheques were cut to purchase the equipment. The Hon. Member should tell us because the vessel moved from one wharf and ended up at the Coast Guard Wharf. The moment it ended up at the Coast Guard Wharf, the last I heard of it was that the Hon. Prime Minister went to Essequibo and proudly announced that the police floating base was to be stationed in the mouth of the Pomeroon River. I do not think he knew what he was talking about because there was already a Guyana Defence Force (GDF) floating base at the mouth of the Pomeroon River. So we do not need two floating bases there. The Joint Services agreed that the floating base would be at the mouth of the Waini River. If you got the Waini River mixed up with the Pomeroon River, I am sorry we could not have been any help to you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute to wrap up.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you.

We did not hear anything so far - it is still a mystery - about under whose portfolio the Custom Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU) falls. When I look at the *Official Gazette*, I still am not very clear who is responsible for CANU. What I did hear is pronouncement from the Office of the President or the Ministry of the Presidency stating that they are going to bring CANU and the police together. Where are we with that? I know the difficulties that are inherent in that move. I know what it is because we tried to do it and there was resistance to it. I assume that that is being experienced up to now. [**An Hon. Member:** You failed.] It is not a question of failing. Well, you are there to succeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Minister of Education [Dr. Roopnarine]: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I have to say that, looking at the list of speakers, I find myself in a most curious cluster. I was very instructed and entertained by my Friend the Hon. Clement Rohee's presentation and there is one aspect of it with which I do want to deal. That really has to do with the points he offered on the question of national unity and the extent to which we, on this side, were failing to take advantage of the experience and knowledge that exist on the other side, acquired over long years of experience. I cannot speak for my Colleagues but I do believe that certainly we, in the Ministry of Education, are relying on the expertise and experience of our Colleagues on that side to move us forward in an area in which, I believe, we need not have any great fat. Education is an area of our work in this Assembly over which we do not need to fight. It is an area, I believe, over which we can find much agreement. I do not think there is anyone in this House who would argue that there is anything more important than the formation of our young people. This is what takes place in our schools and for it to happen as you want it to happen, it would require the active collaboration of parents, teachers and, I believe, all energies in this House.

As we, in the Ministry of Education, under the APNU/AFC Government, embark on our first full calendar year of operations, it inevitably continues to be partially in diagnostic mode. As we said, in 2015, we shall go ahead with what works and discard what does not. I had promised this in 2015; I repeat it now. As we forge ahead, we remain cognisant of the immediate past state of the education system, the course of which, I believe, we must change for the good of the nation. We remain cognisant of listing some of the critical shortcomings of the system, as I see it, the system that we have inherited. I will cite a number of areas: one, there has been a neglect of the tertiary education system; two, the significant appropriations, the returns on which were often far

from optimal; three, the mismatch of appropriations with the articulated plans; four, the gap between programme rationalising and programme implementation; five, politically motivated decision making and coercion and intimidation of professionals; six, the hyping of the stellar performance of a few in contrast to poor and declining results overall.

This is not a system that we intend to perpetuate. In its Manifesto, the APNU/AFC coalition clearly identified the creation of a united, peaceful and developed Guyana as its core objective. That objective or any one of its component parts is not achievable in a society which has not benefited from real education. By that I mean education being a state of knowing and learning that engenders the appreciation of human beings, of their existence, biologically and socially; education that induces rationality to their existence; and education that enables the application of knowledge to themselves and their environment in a complex relationship of thought, desire and work as a basis for sustenance and self-reproduction. It is the achievement of that state of being or the continuum towards its achievement that APNU/AFC refers to when it speaks about a good life. Education is the driving force, the locomotive engine of that good life, and our primary challenge is crafting a system that engenders education as we conceive it.

The stark reality is that our education system, under the previous Administration, did not grapple with that concern, with focus instead being placed on the achievements of certificates at the expense of the education of the citizens. We enjoin the entire nation to join us in this enterprise of enhancing the education system to address our growth and improvement of society over the next 50 years and beyond. We enjoin our Hon. Colleagues of the Opposition, in particular.

In view of APNU/AFC's objective-oriented approach to the fulfilment of its mandate to govern, in view of its understanding of the historiography of Guyana and in the context of its understanding of the role of education, it conceptualised an appropriate approach to education in Guyana. The approach envisaged programmes in as much as it identifies specific strategies for the achievement of its objective - a good life for all. From a programmatic perspective, the APNU/AFC concluded that attention to the curricula for the education system is key since therein would be the knowledge which ought to be shared by Guyanese who would be involved in the project, creating a good life for all. This also takes into consideration that curricula would inevitably address the question of the manner in which learning should occur, thus providing an opportunity for approaches to learning and the application of knowledge to be inculcated.

APNU/AFC also recognises the plural nature of the Guyanese society and, in response to that recognition, determined that the University of Guyana should establish research programmes to investigate the causal factor of ethnic and racial tensions and conflicts in our society and to make recommendations on how to address these.

Clearly, the APNU/AFC's Manifesto provided an unambiguous direction in relation to how the education system should be remedied as well as identifying the central issues that required attention. These issues include: one, meeting the nutritional and transportation needs of primary and secondary schools; two, retaining and recruiting teachers; three, reforming the curriculum; four, equipping the schools for the teaching of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) selected subjects; five, rescuing the University of Guyana; six, implementing a national programme for technical and vocational education across the country; and seven, creating a friendly and equitable environment for learning, along with extracurricular activities that would enhance all-round development.

In terms of the 2015 Budget projections, those core strategic concerns are reflected in the presentation of this Administration's inaugural Budget, less than a year ago. It bears reminding that, in his inaugural Budget speech in 2015, the Minister of Finance projected that education would become both a means to and an end of sustainable development. He emphasised the intended vision where all of our citizens would have equal access to high quality education and learning opportunities and where education is positioned as the key intermediary through which we lay the foundation of a robust, competitive economy as well as an inclusive and social cohesive society.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I ask you to reclaim your seat for a moment.

9.56 p.m.

The Hon. Prime Minister would proceed to move a motion for continuation of the debate beyond 10.00 p.m.

Suspension of Standing Order No. 10

Mr. Nagamootoo: If it pleases Your Honour, I beg to move that this National Assembly continues to meet and to discuss the matters on today's agenda, beyond the hour of 10.00 p.m., until the list is completed.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will continue until we have exhausted our list. Please proceed.

Dr. Roopnarine: On that occasion, the Hon. Minister of Finance further underlined the collaborative nature of the education enterprise and the need for a holistic and integrated approach to education, the objectives being to ensure a seamless transition between schooling and employment. He projected that ultimately:

> "By 2020, our children and young people must be exposed to an appropriate mix of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, liberal arts, and sports and culture that together will ensure well-rounded individuals who are capable of excelling in their chosen path."

In enjoining the Hon. Minister, Mr. Jordan, on that occasion, I, first of all, intimated the intention to establish a commission of inquiry into the education system, with a view of locating precisely where our journey begins. This approach is also informed by the intention to formulate evidence-based policies and system-based reform. In consonance with this approach, I highlighted the need for the establishment of the National Advisory Council as a stakeholder forum that would guide the process of constructing and implementing an evidence-based strategy, based on core tenets, including: one, a broad, multi-phased strategy framework for national education reform and development; two, contextualisation within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Regional Education and Human Resources (HR) Development Strategy 2030; three, particular focus on the use of technology and education sector management; and four, particular focus on Hinterland education reform.

In that regard, I mentioned some specific initiatives that were to be outlined. Among those initiatives were: one, a review of the Education Cash Grant Programme which seems not to be serving the intended purpose; two, the expansion of the warm meals and general school feeding

programmes; three, the revamping of school boards and parent teacher association and the re-establishment of regional education committees; four, better service delivery to the disabled and a more enlightened approach, by the population, to persons with disabilities; five, the strategic integration of ICT education as opposed to a One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) Project that proved not only ill-conceived, but was also, in our experience, froth with wastage and corruption; and six, provision of teachers with both equipment and training.

The 2020 outcome that I envisaged was the production of a competent Guyanese citizen and provision of our youth, the voice and the role in shaping their destiny. The reality of 2015 was that it was a severely truncated year. The Government was installed in May, 2015, but a budget only became available in September, 2015. Having embarked in September, much was done to commence the realisation of that which had been articulated in the Manifesto, and which found itself into the proposals for the 2015 Budget and subsequent presidential and ministerial pronouncements.

Even against this backdrop, in keeping with the Ministry's action plan and with a view to the actual state of the sector, a number of policies were formulated and initiated. The most notable of such initiatives are: one, the use of the Grades Two and Four Assessments purely for diagnostic purposes and the attendant follow-up, and the use of the Grade VI assessment solely for the determination of placement in post primary schools; two, the lowering of the entry age for nursery schools from three years, nine months to three years, six months; three, the raising of the age for qualification to write the Grade Six Assessment from 12 to 13 years, thus eliminating the need for unwarranted acceleration solely for the purpose of writing the Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE) even though the pupil might not be preferred; four, the engagement of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) to develop and administer Grades Two, Four and Six Assessments, while simultaneously building the National Centre for Education Resource Development's (NCERD) capacity in that area, with the intention of restoring the function to NCERD in the medium term; five, the development of the mechanism to ensure that the CSEC School Based Assessments (SBAs) are submitted by 31st January each year; six, the review of the status of parent teachers associations countrywide, with a view to ensuring that they are established and functional; seven, a review of the student report system and parent teacher conference arrangements with the intent of ensuring that reports are provided

in a timely manner and parents are actively involved in their children's welfare; eight, the drafting of a universal prayer for schools and a consultative process to achieve consensus on the prayer, in recognition of the plural nature of Guyanese society; nine, the crafting of sports and physical education survey instrument which is to be used to determine what steps should be taken to ensure that sports and physical education find their rightful place in the school system; and the induction of a cohort of education cadet officers: this programme is intended to improve the quality of administrators in and administration of the education system.

Allow me to say here, Mr. Speaker, that I have attempted to place great emphasis on the restoration of the place of sports and music in the school system. I have a vision, over the next few years, of encouraging, since it is beyond our capacity in a budgetary sense to provide an operational orchestra in all the schools, a small steel band, for instance, which would be wonderful, but expensive. What I know is that every child is born with a musical instrument, which is called the voice, and it is not beyond us to train school choirs throughout the country and to have our children singing every morning. In fact, I was thinking as I listened to the Hon. Minister, Carl Greenidge, today, speaking about the Venezuelans. I was tempted to think of if all the children in all the schools of Guyana, at a single hour every morning, were to be singing "*not a blade of grass*", perhaps they would even hear us in Caracas.

Early Childhood Education

The operational education engines of educational delivery are early childhood, primary, secondary, technical and vocational and tertiary, each capably supported by several units within the Ministry. In the area of early childhood education, we have had the following achievements: one, four new nursery schools were commissioned in 2015 - Good Hope Nursery in Region 4, Number 77 Nursery in Region 6, Kairuni Nursery in Region 4 and Cummings Park Nursery in Georgetown; two, the newly developed nursery diagnostic assessments were administered as well as the revamped literacy and numeracy assessments for nursery years one and two; three, the Roraima Reader Series, which was piloted in 2013, was rolled out nationally; four, Nursery Field Officers received further training and are expected to support the monitoring and supervision being done at this level. The Guyana Early Childhood Education Project is being rolled out in the Hinterland regions to improve our delivery and output.

In the area of primary education, the primary grades diagnostic assessments were administered system-wide, with specific emphasis placed on teachers' planning based on the demonstrated needs of pupils; secondly, greater emphasis is being placed on the early grades, literacy and numeracy preparation of pupils to ensure mastery is attained. To that end, all schools are now required to prepare action plans based on the needs of pupils, as demonstrated by assessments and to report on the progress made at the end of every term; thirdly, continuous professional development of teachers in the primary level has been expanded to all regions, with specific emphasis on education delivery in the core subject areas; fourthly, music instruction has been improved with the training of primary teachers to facilitate the formation and sustainability of school choirs. The expansion to include the use of instruments such as recorders and steel bands will be attained through further training of teachers. This is in keeping with our objective of significantly enhancing arts education within the school system.

With regard to secondary education, firstly, through collaboration with the Caribbean Examination Council, a number of CSEC and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) syllabus reviews and methodology workshops were conducted for teachers across the country in various subject areas; secondly, the work to improve the performance in the key areas of English Language and Mathematics is ongoing, with consistent training and monitoring of teachers. In addition, the Guyana Secondary Education Improvement Project has commenced, with specific emphasis on the improvement of Mathematics instruction in all secondary schools; thirdly, a survey was conducted on the status of all dormitories across the country and the information compiled will be used to devise a comprehensive dormitory improvement strategy.

10.11 p.m.

Fourthly, through collaboration with the Faculty of Education and Humanities at the University of Guyana, teachers of Spanish have commenced their Bachelor of Arts degree programme. It is our hope also that come September to introduce Portuguese into secondary schools.

Guyana continues to benefit from the contribution of World Teach, Project Trust and Peace Core Volunteers in secondary schools across the country.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes more.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes as an extension to his original time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Dr. Roopnaraine: In the area of technical and vocational education, technical institutes have collaborated with the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to meet requirements for Guyana to be recognised to award the Caribbean vocational qualifications at the next Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) meeting. Competence based education and training courses are still being rolled out in all technical institutes. As promised, we made good on our commitment to strengthen one of the core components of the system, namely teacher training. The Cyril Potter College of Education has had its largest intake of approximately 751 trainees in 2015. The technical teacher programme has commenced in collaboration with the Government Technical Institute (GTI).

The mentorship and induction programme for new teachers has been embedded in the system with widespread and consistent monitoring being done in all regions. Teacher training has been expanded to Kwakwani, Charity and Mahdia to ensure underqualified and untrained teachers receive the necessary capacity building. Distance education training programmes continue in Regions 1 and 9 as well as other satellite centres across the country. The Guyana Improving Teacher Education Project came to an end in 2015 with the significant strategic objectives being attained.

I turn to the University of Guyana with a few brief remarks. On the important issue of the fate of our sole national tertiary education institution, I am happy to report that a new University Council was appointed without any political manipulation of the process and a new Chancellor was appointed by the council. The council has since embarked on a search for a new Vice-Chancellor to replace the outgoing Vice-Chancellor Professor Jacob Opedayi. As well, the council has embarked on the process of establishing a transformational task force to craft a strategy for the reversal of the university's decline. The first meeting of this task force was convened earlier today.

As it relates to the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) assessments, performance in 2015 continued to show improvement over previous years. In the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency

Examinations (CAPE) candidates wrote units in 29 subject areas. Each unit comprises three modules equivalent to 150 credit hours and is separately examined and certified. Candidates from Guyana wrote 56 units at this year's examination. In addition, for the first time Guyana received two regional top awards for CAPE.

The analysis of the 2015 Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) results revealed that the overall pass rate at the general and technical proficiencies for Grades I to III was 62.72% as opposed to 60.21% in 2014. The Grades I to III passes in English A and Mathematics both improved over last year's performance. The English A pass rate is 49.36%, up from 46.98% in 2014 and 45.69% in 2013. The Mathematics pass rate is 45.07%, up from 38.75% in 2014 and 28.92% in 2013. Guyana continued to earn top regional CSEC awards.

The appointment of boards for the various schools was done, as well as the appointment of boards for other allied agencies, that is, the National Accreditation Council (NAC), which was also achieved. The National Accreditation Council and the Council for Technical and Vocational Training have forged ahead with the execution of their projects under the CARICOM Single Market and Economy/ Caribbean Development Bank (CSME/CDB) facility. The NAC should be equipped to commence accreditation later this year. The National Accreditation Council and the Ministry proposes to host the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education annual workshop and conference in 2016.

In 2015 the hot meals programme was expanded to include four schools in Region 7, namely, Precious Gems Nursery, Beach View Nursery, Hill View Nursery and Future Builders Nursery. With regard to transportation, His Excellency would have strategically commissioned five boats for use in Region 2, Pomeroon, Region 4, Demerara River, Region 5, Mahaicony River and Region 10, Berbice River. In 2016, we expect that under the 3 "Bs" initiative the critical gap in access to education will continue to be addressed.

During the period May to December, 2015 a number of areas of concern were identified and these will be the focus of our agenda in 2016. They include

- First, the need for psychosocial support programmes for schools and residential facilities. Beyond the glaring fact that suicide disproportionally impacts upon our

young people, there is recognition that it is only one of the unfortunate outcomes of poor psychosocial support system, in general.

- Secondly, the need for an approach for the reintegration of teenage mothers into the school system. Young women in the Twenty-first Century cannot have pregnancy be a barrier to their continued education.
- Thirdly, the provision of more opportunities for continuous professional development and the widening of the scope of the learning channel and the Ministry's radio broadcast; the expansion of the skills for life training programme generally, with emphasis on the hinterland areas; and, we need to deal with the issue of accommodation for teachers in the hinterland.

These are among the challenges that are going to be confronted in 2016 as the Ministry seeks to overcome these challenges and launch new initiatives for the enhancement of the education system, which enhancement will eventually impact the ultimate goal of the system, the production of a better all-round citizen and the creation of a better society.

The Ministry is committed to an inclusive approach to its work, hence much of what it proposed to do will be subjected to a consultative process with its stakeholders, foremost of whom would be the teachers, parents, students and employers. In fact, the inquiry which was referred to in the Budget 2015 speech should be fully operationalised and concluded in 2016. The members of the commission have already been assembled. Similarly, the members of the National Education Council, National Advisory Council, have also been identified. The intention is for the council to be convened at the end of the inquiry. The council would then deliberate on the findings of the inquiry and the Education Sector Bill and provide the Ministry with advice on the way forward. Thereafter, the Ministry will be engaged on the review of the 2014-2018 Education Sector Plan. The reviewing and tabling of the Education Sector Bill in the National Assembly will see the Ministry emerging from what I earlier described as the diagnostic phase into its full-fledged operations to improve the education system.

I am assured that the Ministry has been and will be doing to demonstrate its commitment to the policies and programmes outlined in the manifesto of 2015 and subsequent pronouncements of the President, the Minister of Finance and yours truly. We will continue with that which works,

discontinue what does not as we embark on new initiatives aimed at ultimately giving the Guyanese a "good life." I believe that a "good life" will only be achieved through an education system that creates the competent Guyanese citizen.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Ramjattan: Before I proceed to deal with the matters, especially the more meritorious ones dealt with by Hon. Member Mr. Rohee, I too want to pay tribute to Mr. Winston Jordan, Hon. Minister of Finance, for coming up with a budget that provides literally for all. What makes it all the more wonderful is the context in which it is being presented; and, that context is a number of difficult, what the economists would call, exogenous and endogenous factors. He has managed with the resources he has got and which he will get through revenue collection in the months to come, the necessary resources to ensure the Ministries in this Government get allocation which will create that which is the "good life" which is beckoning in this country today. In that context then, we must appreciate all the more this budget. I want to thank you very much Hon. Minister of Finance. To do that in these circumstances requires some amount of genius. Those who might not want to grant you that status, well, this is a democratic country and they are entitled to their opinion.

I want to tell my honourable colleague, Mr. Rohee, in this budget debate that I took a stand against police torture, and nobody can deny that. I took a stand against drunken driving by ensuring that there is a curfew which, by the way, it is but the law. It was not anything but the law. I took a stand to police our vast borders in association with the Office of the President, even if we had to use horses to do so. I took a stand, bold and strong, against illegal firearms and offered an amnesty. Even though partially successful, it was a stand nevertheless. Hon. Mr. Rohee, as far as I knew, never took any such stands.

10.26 p.m.

If anyone needs a dose of that medication, which he talks about, it is him.

I want to be frank with my colleague and indicate that a number of the points he made are largely meritorious because we do have a very difficult crime and violence situation in this country. It is particularly during the last decade and a half in which this crime and violence have become a

legitimate concern for each and every one of us. Guyana's homicide rates have dramatically increased since 2000 from 9.9 per 100,000 inhabitants to now - 2014 and this was the last statistics I got - 20 per 100,000. It rose from a lower level in 2000 to 2013, that is, the robbery rate reaching 214.9 per 100,000 inhabitants.

Domestic violence rate also rose in 2013 to almost 431.2 per 100 inhabitants and we also have in accordance with a very profound report from the World Health Organization, the highest suicide rate in the Americas and in the world, and that were based on statistics prior to 2014.

This issue about these negatives in our society did not occur during the course of our stewardship from May last year. They were with us. If we want to confront these issues with the full brunt of our intellect, it requires us being frank about these figures and not in way trying to twist facts to play political football, because it is not going to get us anywhere. To that extent then we have to… It is by virtue of getting these statistics then analysing them to find out what are the causes.

The crime problem in Guyana is compounded by high incidents of violent behaviour at the community level. There is no doubt about that. I see that that every day, literally. Then, of course, there is relatively low levels of trust in law enforcement agencies. I must say that Hon. Member Mr. Rohee had commanded a commission from Mr. Ganga Persaud. In that commission, Mr. Ganga Persaud's report revealed exactly that. Low levels of trust in the law enforcement and also, what is called, a set of social norms that tolerate the use of violence among partners and of course within the community itself. I have the report here by Mr. Ganga Persaud. I think the Ministry still owes him some moneys for this report. We also have in an assessment report - it is necessary that we take these facts as produce by another report - the Citizen Security Programme Phase One Report, that the perception of insecurity increased dramatically in and around 2014. The perception of the police, that they are not doing a good job, rose from 26 % in 2006 to 43 % in 2014. That is nationally. They were certain regions where it rose even longer.

Those findings from major studies done by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Mr. Ganga Persaud and a number of others have caused my administration of the Ministry of Public Security identify certain priority matters to ensure that we can curb this scourge that assails us as a people. We are using that which were those findings and facts in what is called now the

Citizens Security Programme Phase Two. I want to commend what I inherited in the Ministry of Home Affairs, now called Ministry of Public Security, because there were indeed a lot of facts and recommendations that were in its policy and research department that I found extraordinarily useful.

I agree that stopping crime and violence is not going to be merely the task of law enforcement. The social factors mentioned and the social projects mentioned by Mr. Rohee, have to be promoted.

That is why the Citizens Security Programme Phase Two is going to be incorporated as a big part of the crime strategy of Guyana, which was literally adopted. It is in the context of it being integrated with the five-point plan of the Commissioner of Police and a number of other task force recommendations, such as the combating of illicit trafficking in person, the task force on suicide and there is the drug master plan strategy, all being incorporated and integrated. We are going to come up with that which is going to be probably the best strategy, but it will take some time.

I want to tell Hon. Member Mr. Rohee and the Members on the other side that the Citizen's Security Strategy is a five-year plan. It is not a one-year plan and in the Project Execution Unit is going to ensure that our Smart City Project, which he seems to want immediately, in eight months,… He cannot have it. Right now the Project Execution Unit is doing some designing as to what might be best for the city. Remember in Georgetown, 52% of Guyana's crimes are committed when compared nationally, in the city and that is the Ministry of Home Affairs' statistics. Right now, the statistics of serious crimes in and around the divisions are proving that.

We thus have to incorporate a variety of these recommendations and findings into that. We are coming up with this plan that will involve community based crime prevention, capacity building. Of course, we have started and we have community policing groups all around the country which we are trying to resource and tool better. He spoke about tool kits, and so on. Yes, we are doing all of that and more. More vehicles will be provided. [**Mr. Rohee:** Give back the vehicles.] I will come just now to a number. When I got into the office there in Brickdam I had to take some vehicles from the community policing and give to the Police Force for purposes of the

police doing their surveillance. They will get theirs. I am not going to say that they would not get it back, but it will take some time.

We also see another component of this citizen security dealing with evidence based social projects. We have to do what is called local diagnostics and we are not going to incorporate necessarily what is from overseas. There is a need sometimes for international imitation, but it must be juxtaposed with local invention, if I may put it that way. We can combine the two to get the correct strategy and then we will move on.

As a part of the next component, we will also increase the effectiveness of the Guyana Police Force in preventing and investigating crime and violence by creating a network component that is going to ensure that there will be literally a police headquarters, a command centre that will know everything and all the reports being made at each and every station. It is going to be to the extent…

Additionally, the programme will ensure support for criminal and forensic investigation techniques. In that regard, we have to do lots more to graduate the forensic lab into a higher level that would get it the certification required for it to do the DNA testing and all of that. It is an important aspect that is required in this country, that forensic lab. As the certifiers have been saying there are certain difficulties of integrity with specimen and a number of issues that caused it not as yet to be so certified. There is difficulty of space and a number of difficulties which include cost, and so on. We are going to look after those this year in at least a gradual way. It might not be done this year or it might take some more time.

Also we want to congratulate the United States Government for ensuring, only two days ago, that we now have the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) office here in Guyana. It is not only the DEA office that is assisting in relation to police matters. We have got huge support from the British who, right now, are in the process of doing a big training in relation to immigration officers. The arrangement is for them to come here in Guyana to train at least 30 immigration officers. Also it is to train a number of policemen as they have been doing either by going to Florida, New York, and there is some police academy in El Salvador under the Organization of American States (OAS) agreement. All of that we are having a lot of policemen…

In last year's budget debate I indicated how policemen were not having these training because there was, as I said then, certain controls. Whatever it was, they have now got no interference, in relation to these matters, to the extent now that almost everyone that becomes policemen are sent overseas. The Cabinet, as of today, has not blocked any from going overseas for training and we feel all of these are going to help in that.

There is also a component three which seeks to strengthen the rehabilitative services of the Guyana Prison Service. This component will employ a menu of many measures aimed at reducing prisoners' recidivism, that is, going back as soon as they come out to steal or to commit robbery again.

10.41 p.m.

We need alternatives to incarceration for pre-trial detainees. That is why, as part of that larger umbrella or main set of menu measures, we are going to deal with a brand new Juvenile Justice Bill this year, as was mentioned by the Attorney General. It is being fine-tuned, I understand, and it will be going to go for further consultation. We do have a strategy. Moreover, the Ministry of Public Security also has, right now, a final draft of the drug master plan, which was further refined as that which was there during the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee's administration. I must say that it is being fine-tuned by Mr. Michael Atherley. I want to tell Mr. Rohee this, so that Members over there will also know that Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) comes under the Ministry of Public Security, and this drug master plan strategy is going to… As Mr. Rohee said, he had difficulties with it in integrating the networks. We are going to make sure that it is done under an umbrella organisation called the National Anti-Narcotics Agency (NANA). It will incorporate in an integrative way CANU, the Police Narcotics Unit and the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). It is important that he understands that. It is called NANA. They will have their autonomy, these units, but they will come under an umbrella organisation for purposes of ensuring that their work be integrated. CANU would not in a way know what the Police Narcotics Unit is doing or the GRA is not doing. It is a concept that is required especially in these times when the integrative measures are needed to be put in place to ensure that all of them know.

It is also important to know that this M. B. Tamakay platform, which Mr. Rohee was talking about, the first cheque is to ensure that it is built and it has been built. There has been another cheque issued for the ancillaries to be placed in it so that it can be like a police station on a floating platform. Certain moneys in this budget, the details in the Capital Estimates, are here; and provision for the floating base, $6.3 million. [**Mr. Rohee:** We want an audit of that.] Well, you are going to get your audit of whatever you want. [**Mr. Rohee:** You are making an issue.] I want you to give me as much scrutiny as you want. We have here a number of questions asked in relation to the training of policemen, the M. B. Tamakay and what is happening with the drug master strategy. I am just reporting to this National Assembly because these are the things that would appear.

Right now, in relation to the Smart City Project and the Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras, the Project Execution Unit would want to know whether it is America or England it would have to go to see it in action to find out what best might be the model that would be applicable here for Guyana. All of that is now in this first year, the design year as it is called.

It was only last week, in last month, that the disbursements were finally obtained from IDB for this US$15 million project which will be a five-year programme and which comes up to $3 billion. [**Ms. Manickchand:** You have spent three minutes on that, so…] You will not fix my agenda, Madam. You can never do that.

The police force also requires a number of comfort zones in the context of having better facilities. I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for literally giving…Although we had asked for some more, I must say, he indicated that we could not have got all. I appreciated that. Here are some. Rehabilitation of officers' quarters in Fort Kaituma - $7 million; rehabilitation of Special Branch Admin building - $24 million; rehabilitation to Leonora Police Station - $6.7 million; Enmore Outpost - $5.3 million; Mounted Branch stable - $31 million; Reliance Police Station - $10 million; living quarters, Mahaicony - $6.1 million; rehabilitation of East La Penitence Police Station - $5.6 million. Now, when there is a police force that has comfortable working conditions it is going to deliver. Try to understand it in that context. There is too, provision for the floating base; construction of the stable at Lethem another - $20 million; construction of the lockups at the Brickdam Police Station, the upper flat - $20 million; rehabilitation of Quarter Master building - $60 million; band room - we also want some music

and dedication as the Minister said but we are going to refurbish it with lots more instruments to the tune of $74 million, Ms. Teixeira. We will have new drums not old drums. There is the construction of a brand new police station, as I have been hearing from some Members in the back benches, at La Parfaite Harmonie.

I know time is going to run and I want you and the Members over there to understand that we also have for the Police Force's Fingerprint Branch being resourced with a number of other items that will be to the tune of $15 million. The Ballistic Section - $10 million; the communication equipment, the Integrated Crime Information System (ICIS) - $60 million, and a whole lot more, and even the Canines Section some $4 million.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes more.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes extension added to his original amount.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ramjattan: The Ministry of Public Security has lots more than merely the police force, and it is especially important that we also pay attention to that which was done in relation to capital for the fire service, and what was done in relation to a number of other services, even CANU and the forensic lab. It is all there in the Capital Estimates. I want to say that in the fire department we are trying to strengthen that by ensuring that we move ahead with the consultancy for the realignment of that organisation structure and also the job descriptions. There are certain recommended models for the fire and rescue services administration. We are in the process of fine-tuning those in an emergency service department. It is going to be hard work but we are also getting the support of some members of the diaspora who got almost US$100,000 in equipment for the fire service out of the Hillsborough New Brunswick Canada Fire Department. I have already indicated our gratitude to Fire Chief Glen Northrup and also Chief Ivan Davis of the Norton Fire Department through some people who were in the fire service but are now living overseas. One of the persons' named is Mr. Taylor. And so we are going to utilise that. The diaspora support will be there to get all these things. It is going to be very much important.

Before my ten minutes is done I want to also make mention of what a lot of the Opposition Members talked about, and that is the increase fees for gun licences. I have here a Cabinet paper since 2012 to come into operation in 2013, signed by Dr. Roger Luncheon, and the original paper was signed by Mr. Rohee, to increase fees for shot gun from $2,000 to $5,000. So I do not know what they are rowing about. They had argued a case. It was then from $5,000 to $20,000. Now, when Mr. Ramjattan does it, it is a big story. Rifle, it was to be $25, 000 and I increased it further this year to $40,000. For firearms, the dealers, they went from $5,000 to $30,000. I have gone over $150,000. They did not implement it, maybe because of probably political reasons. But it was debated and they passed it in their Cabinet. The argument is well they have passed it and we are going ahead executing on that which they passed because it is necessary.

I want also to make mention of something that we have heard that is very important, and that is - I think it was my good colleague, Hon. Member Dr. Vindhya Persaud, who indicated yesterday that she wanted some information as to how many… It would appear that we are not releasing women prisoners. I would like to tell her, through the parole board, and also the arguments by the Office of the President, under the grant of pardon,… I will name them because sometimes this thing is twisted and turned in the public as if we are against women. We are not. Bibi Basheen, Latisha Sattaur, Indira Bissondai, Jasodra Bahadur, Annette Small, Odessa Thomas, Coleen Easton, Tiffany Peters and Ashley Albert, grant of pardon, their ages range from the ages of 37, and, one by the way, is at the age of 60. It was at least 11 or 12 of them in the 2015 December Presidential pardon. If the information is required, I have an open line. As you all know my line, you just ask and you will get the information so that there might not be any misinformation as a result of no information. There are lots more that I can speak on in relation to the Ministry of Public Security.

They want to hear something about SOCU. SOCU is under the Ministry of Public Security. It was created by the Hon. Minister Rohee. [**Ms. Teixeira:** It was under the law.] The protocols have been already drafted in relation to how… That was not done, as far as I understand, under Mr. Rohee's administration. I have now done that. It is about six pages of protocols as to how it must do its operations and those are going to be made public. You will see them. It is to ensure that they come in line with that which is under the Police Standing Orders. I am glad that you will welcome that.

The difficulties of overcoming crime and violence in our society are not going to be an overnight success. It will take some time and people must appreciate the difficulties of this thing. It is not as if it is only in Guyana. In Jamaica, Minister Bunting is having problems; Trinidad, it has huge problems.

10.56 p.m.

It probably had lots more than us here in Guyana, but with the Drug Enforcement Agency, with all these Task Forces and the men and women behind them, with the Guyana Police Force (GPC) and our Prisons Service, our Fire Service and all those that come under the Ministry of Public Security, we are going to beat this scourge that assails this society. I must say in that sense that all that which was allocated to this Ministry this year, and of course, in years to come, will ensure that we beat it. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. Hon. Members, we have exhausted our list for today. Hon. Prime Minister, you may move the adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I now move that this House be adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, 12th February, at 1.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, 12th February, at 1.00 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.57 p.m.

Annex 103

Letter from the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (26 Apr. 2016)

MINISTRY OF THE PRESIDENCY
Vlissengen Road,
Bourda, Georgetown,
Guyana

2016-04-26

His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Office of the Secretary General
United Nations Headquarters
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
United States of America

Excellency,

I have the honour to write with regard to the revised Way Forward which you had proposed on December 14, 2015, pursuant to Article IV of the 1966 *Geneva Agreement* between Guyana and Venezuela.

Guyana records its appreciation for your sustained efforts and those of your team in seeking to make progress in obtaining a path to a final and binding procedure for settlement of the territorial controversy.

Guyana regrets that progress has not yet been possible.

The controversy arose as a result of Venezuela's contention that the 1899 Arbitral Award relating to the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is "null and void".

Guyana recalls that both the initial UN proposal of 12 November 2015, and the revised proposal of December 14, 2015, affirmed that the Secretary-General "intends to choose the International Court of Justice" if there is no agreement between the parties prior to the end of his tenure in December 2016.

Guyana recalls, further, that the meetings of the UN delegation during the week of 14 March 2016 with the parties in Georgetown and Caracas, respectively, were intended as a final attempt to arrive at an agreement, notwithstanding the authority of the Secretary-General to choose the means of settlement, irrespective of the consent of the parties.

Guyana has expressed its willingness to accept the Way Forward in a spirit of utmost cooperation and compromise. More than five months have now lapsed since the initial proposal and December 2016 is fast approaching. Venezuela, evidently, is unwilling to accept any effective procedure for settlement of the controversy.

Guyana will commemorate the 50th anniversary of its independence on 26 May 2016. It has been our hope that this important event might be celebrated in the context of a situation of territorial stability. That has proven not to be possible in the face of Venezuela's continuing unfounded claim to almost two-thirds of Guyana's sovereign territory.

Guyana's security, development and well-being have been impaired by this unfortunate situation. I am sure that you will agree that it is not a situation that should be allowed to persist any longer as we seek to develop our young nation.

Guyana respectfully submits that, in light of the efforts undertaken and the lack of progress, Your Excellency should now in the exercise of your authority under Article IV of the 1966 *Geneva Agreement*, inform the parties of your choice of the procedure leading to the final and binding settlement of the controversy by the International Court of Justice.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

David Granger
President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

Annex 104

Note Verbale from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Ministry of People's Power for External Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, No. 1075/2016 (1 June 2016)

NOTE NO.: 1075/ 2016

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana presents its compliments to the Ministry of Popular Power for External Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and has the honour to inform that the Ministry has received a report from the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) that Officers of that State entity were shot at on the Cuyuni River, by members of the Venezuelan armed forces.

The report states that on Monday, May 30, 2016, at approximately 17:20 hrs, on the way from Arau, in the course of conducting their official duties, the Officers of the GGMC came under gun fire from Venezuelan armed forces, approximately one mile above Eteringbang.

The Government of Guyana wishes to register its grave concern over this unwarranted and dangerous action by the Venezuelan military which is in flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and general international law. The Government of Guyana calls on the Government of Venezuela to desist from the use of force and provocative actions. Such acts can only lead to the destabilization of relations between Guyana and Venezuela. The Government of Guyana intends to bring this matter to the attention of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guyana avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Popular Power for External Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela the assurances of its highest consideration.

GEORGETOWN
June 1, 2016

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
GUYANA

Annex 105

Letter from the Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (3 June 2016)

FTU: 25/2/1
2/7/1

June 03, 2016

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Office of the Secretary -General
United Nations Headquarters
760 United Nations Plaza,
New York, New York 10017,
United States

Excellency,

I write as a matter of urgency to inform you of a most worrying development in Guyana's relations with Venezuela.

On May 30th, 2016 at approximately 17:20 hours, a team of three officials from the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, came under gun fire from the Venezuelan army in the Cuyuni River within Guyana's sovereign territory. The Officials were returning from a monitoring and inspection exercise at Arau, in the Essequibo Region, when the chartered boat used for transportation came under attack approximately one mile from the Eteringbang Police Station.

This follows earlier incidents in 2015 during which Venezuelan patrol boats repeatedly violated Guyana's territorial sovereignty by unlawfully crossing the international boundary, in addition to seizure by the Venezuelan navy in 2013 of a survey vessel well within Guyana's maritime areas.

The use of military force complements and follows closely in the wake of letters sent by Venezuelan authorities to Canadian companies operating or considering operating within Guyana's borders. Those letters falsely suggested that the Geneva Agreement transferred the Essequibo region to Venezuela under international law. On the basis of that fiction they threatened the firms with all action/powers at their disposal.

The Government of Guyana has communicated its grave concern over this latest incident to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and has called on the Venezuelan Government to desist from provocative actions on Guyana's border that can only lead to the destabilization of relations.

Excellency, these series of incidents have left no doubt in our minds that the Government of Venezuela is prepared to utilize unlawful means in pursuit of its unjustified claim to almost two-thirds of Guyana's territory. I recall the continued illegal occupation of Guyana's half of Ankoko Island by the Venezuelan military and the 2006 bombing of a pontoon in the Cuyuni River by the Venezuelan military, which resulted in the death of a Guyanese citizen.

History is replete with examples of Venezuela's use of its superior military strength against Guyana. This escalating pattern of aggression has continued since 1966 when Guyana gained its independence from Britain and despite the existence of the various mechanisms put in place to address the controversy arising from Venezuela's unjustified contention since 1962 that the 1899 Arbitral Award is null and avoid. In fact, during the twenty-five years of the Good Offices Process, Guyana has continued to face repeated threats and intimidation, military incursions and subversion, and a deliberate policy of stymieing its economic development. That process has been used as a cover to maintain an unjust *status quo* that has seriously undermined Guyana's future just as it celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its independence. This situation is intolerable and unacceptable and cannot be allowed to persist any longer.

At this stage we are unable to see the utility of continuing with a process that has manifestly failed to bring this controversy to a definitive and legally binding conclusion. It is in this regard that I reiterate to you the conviction of the Government of Guyana that recourse to the International Court of Justice is the only realistic means for a lasting solution to the controversy arising from the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899, that established the territorial boundaries between Guyana and Venezuela, is null and void. Such a course is within your power under the 1966 Geneva Agreement, and would bring to an end the difference by recourse to final settlement by the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the Government of Guyana for your unwavering commitment to the proposals set forth in the "Way Forward" and reassure you of the full commitment of Guyana to the peaceful and expeditious resolution of this controversy with Venezuela that stands in the way of harmonious relations between two neighbouring States.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Carl B Greenidge
Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Annex 106

Address of the President of the Republic of Guyana to the U.N. General Assembly, 71st Session, U.N. Doc A/71/PV.8 (20 Sept. 2016)

United Nations A/71/PV.8

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 20 September 2016, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson . . . . (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 109

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/71/1)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2016, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/71/1), under agenda item 109.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I stand before the Assembly today with gratitude for the support I have been given across the decade during which I have had the privilege to serve the great Organization of the United Nations. In taking the oath of office in December 2006, I pledged to work with the Organization for "we, the peoples". With the Charter of the United Nations as our guide and the dedication of the staff, we have achieved much together.

I also stand here in deep concern. Gulfs of mistrust divide citizens from their leaders. Extremists push people into camps of "us" and "them". The Earth assails us with rising seas, record heat and extreme storms. And danger defines the days of many. One hundred and thirty million people need lifesaving assistance; tens of millions of them are children and young people, so that our next generation already at risk.

Yet after 10 years in office, I am more convinced than ever that we have the power to end war, poverty and persecution. We have the means to prevent conflict. We have the potential to close the gap between rich and poor, and to make rights a reality in people's lives. With the Sustainable Development Goals, we have a manifesto for a better future. With the Paris Agreement on climate change, we are tackling the defining challenge of our time. We have no time to lose. I urge all the leaders here to bring the Paris Agreement into force before the end of this year. We need just 26 countries more, representing just 15 per cent of greenhouse-gas emissions. I ask all those here to help lead us to a world of low-carbon growth, increased resilience and greater opportunity and well-being for our children.

Those great gains are threatened by grave security threats. Armed conflicts have grown more protracted and complex. Governance failures have pushed societies past the brink. Radicalization has threatened social cohesion, which is precisely the response that violent extremists seek and welcome. The tragic consequences are on brutal display from Yemen to Libya and Iraq, from Afghanistan to the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin.

In today's world, the conflict in Syria is taking the greatest number of lives and sowing the widest instability. There is no military solution. Many groups have killed many innocents, but none more so than the Government of Syria, which continues to barrel-bomb neighbourhoods and systematically torture thousands of detainees. Powerful patrons who keep feeding the war machine also have blood on their hands. Present in this Hall today are representatives of Governments that have ignored, facilitated, funded, participated in

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and even planned and carried out atrocities inflicted on Syrian civilians by every side in the Syria conflict.

Just when we think it cannot get any worse, the bar of depravity sinks lower. Yesterday's sickening, savage and apparently deliberate attack on a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent aid convoy is the latest example. The United Nations has been forced to suspend aid convoys as a result of that outrage. The humanitarians delivering life-saving aid were heroes. Those who bombed them were cowards. Accountability for crimes such as these is essential. I appeal to all those with influence to end the fighting and get talks started. A political transition is long overdue. After so much violence and misrule, the future of Syria should not rest on the fate of a single man.

One year ago, Palestine proudly raised its flag at United Nations Headquarters, yet the prospects for a two-State solution are decreasing every day, while the occupation grinds into its fiftieth year. As a friend of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, it pains me that the past decade has been 10 years lost to peace; 10 years lost to illegal settlement expansion; 10 years lost to intra-Palestinian divide, growing polarization and hopelessness. This is madness. Replacing a two-State solution with a one-State construct would spell doom, denying Palestinians their freedom and rightful future, and pushing Israel further from its vision of a Jewish democracy towards greater global isolation.

On the Korean peninsula, the fifth nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has again threatened regional and international security. Meanwhile, their people's suffering and plight are worsening. I urge the leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to change course and fulfil their obligations — to their own people and to the family of nations.

In Ukraine, the violence has caused an internal upheaval, renewed tensions across Europe and rekindled geopolitical rivalries. In South Sudan, leaders have also betrayed their people. Indeed, in too many places, we see leaders rewriting constitutions, manipulating elections and taking other desperate steps to cling to power. Those who hold office must understand that it is a privilege entrusted to them by the people, not their personal property. My message to all is clear — serve the people, do not subvert democracy, do not pilfer the country's resources and do not imprison and torture critics.

Yesterday we made great progress in helping people find a haven from conflict and tyranny. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) points the way toward saving lives and protecting the rights of millions of people. We all must meet those promises. All too often, refugees and migrants face hatred. Muslims in particular are being targeted by stereotyping and suspicion that evoke haunting echoes of the dark past. I urge political leaders and candidates to not engage in the cynical and dangerous political math of adding votes by dividing people and multiplying fear. The world must stand up against lies and distortions of truth, and reject all forms of discrimination.

We must also address the factors that compel people to move. That means investing in conflict prevention and engaging in patient diplomacy. As the demand for peacekeeping rises, we must continue strengthening peace operations to help countries secure and maintain peace. I am encouraged that the General Assembly has endorsed the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which can help us tackle the drivers of conflict.

In Myanmar, the transition has entered a promising new phase. In Sri Lanka, post-war healing efforts have deepened. In both countries, true reconciliation rests on ensuring that all communities, minorities and majorities alike, are included in building a real union. Next Monday, I will travel to Colombia for the signing of a peace agreement to end one of the world's longest-running armed conflicts. The United Nations will support the Colombian people every step of the way. There is also encouraging momentum towards an agreement on Cyprus. Let us all support the progress and solutions that may now be at hand.

(*spoke in French*)

I take this opportunity to express my regrets on two matters that have tarnished the Organization's reputation, and far worse, have traumatized the many populations we serve.

First of all, the despicable acts of exploitation and sexual violence committed by some peacekeeping soldiers and other United Nations personnel have compounded the suffering of people already embroiled in armed conflict and have undermined the efforts of so many other United Nations agencies worldwide. Those who would protect must never become predators. Member States and the Secretariat must redouble their

efforts to enforce and bolster the Organization's zero-tolerance policy.

Secondly, Haiti has been sorely tested. Shortly after a devastating earthquake, the country was hit by a cholera outbreak. I am deeply saddened by the terrible suffering of the Haitian people affected by cholera. We must devise a new approach to ease their plight and improve their living conditions. We are firmly resolved to take sustainable action to shoulder that moral responsibility. We are currently drafting a set of measures to assist those most directly affected, and we are intensifying efforts to set up robust water, sanitation and health systems, which is the best long-term protection against disease. We cannot succeed without the unwavering political and financial support of Member States. Details on that strategy are forthcoming. Let us pool our efforts to honour our obligations to the Haitian people.

(*spoke in English*)

Allow me to briefly touch on a few other areas that I hope will long remain priorities of the United Nations.

I am proud that UN-Women came to life during my tenure. It is now our established champion of gender equality and empowerment, seeking to bring about a 50-50 planet. I have appointed more women to senior positions at the United Nations than ever before — and I am proud to call myself a feminist. Women hold up half the sky and are essential to meeting all our goals. I have always said that the least utilized resource in the world is the potential of women. So we must do far more to end deep-seated discrimination and chronic violence against women, to advance their participation in decision-making and to ensure that every girl gets the start in life she deserves.

I have been a proud defender of the rights of all people, regardless of ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Our human rights machinery, along with the Human Rights Up Front initiative, is placing human rights at the centre. Human rights are the pillars of society and the antidotes to violent extremism and civic despair.

We have deepened support for the responsibility to protect. We have made inroads against the death penalty. Landmark convictions by the International Criminal Court and other bodies have advanced accountability, but we still must do far more to prevent genocide and other atrocity crimes. Civil society is essential to all of these efforts.

I ask all present to join me today in saying "yes" to greater space for civil society and independent media, and "no" to cracking down on the freedoms of assembly and expression.

(*spoke in French*)

In the past 10 years, we have made great progress in education and health. Polio has almost been eradicated, more women survive childbirth, and more children are in school and live longer, better lives. Our collective response to the Ebola outbreak has prepared us for future health emergencies. The work of the Global Health Crises Task Force reminds us that vigilance must start well before pandemics reach the front pages. The control of deadly weapons advanced thanks to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Arms Trade Treaty and effective action against chemical weapons.

We need to build on this momentum to move closer to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons once and for all. The World Humanitarian Summit strengthened relief efforts to focus on prevention and resilience as well as on reducing need. We are tapping the energies of young people as never before, including thanks to the work of my first-ever United Nations Envoy on Youth as well as the new Special Envoy on Youth Employment. Partnerships with the private sector have multiplied. We have pushed for responsible practices that harness the best of business for society and the world, and we have made important strides in adapting and reforming the United Nations for the twenty-first century.

(*spoke in English*)

Continued progress will require new heights of solidarity. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. Member States have still not agreed on a formula for reform of the Security Council, which poses a continuing risk to its effectiveness and legitimacy.

In the same spirit, I want to put on the table today a major and much-needed reform for fairness and effectiveness in the United Nations. Far too often, I have seen widely supported proposals blocked, in the name of consensus, by a few or sometimes even just one country. We see this being done by large and small countries alike. Time and again, I have seen essential action and good ideas blocked in the Security Council, blocked in the General Assembly, blocked in the budget process, blocked in the Conference on Disarmament

and other bodies. We see this being done by large and small countries alike.

Is it fair, in this complicated twenty-first century, for any one country, or a few countries, to yield such disproportionate power and hold the world hostage on so many important issues?

Consensus should not be confused with unanimity. The global public is right to ask whether this is how an Organization in which we have invested so much hope and so many aspirations should function. I propose, Mr. President, that you explore, with my successor, the establishment of a high-level panel to find practical solutions that will improve decision-making at the United Nations.

States must also respect the independence of the Secretariat, in accordance with the Charter. When our reports say what needs to be said, Member States should not try to rewrite history. When our human rights personnel act on behalf of the most vulnerable, Member States should not block their path. When our humanitarian workers need to reach populations under siege, Member States should remove all obstacles. And when our envoys and personnel raise difficult issues, Member States should not ostracize them or threaten to banish them from the country. We must all be open and accountable to the people we serve.

There is one last measure of the change that has defined the past decade.

It is hard to believe, but when I took office, a smartphone like this had not even been introduced to the world. Today it is a lifeline and perhaps, at times, the bane of our existence. It is an indispensable part of our lives. Our phones and social media have connected the world in ways that were unimaginable when I took office. Yes, they have been abused by extremists and hate groups. But they have also created a world of new communities and opportunities. For me, it is all a reminder of the power of individuals to change the world.

After all, people power helped make the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) the most inclusive development process of our time. People power mobilized millions to push leaders to take climate action. People power is what I have seen in every corner of the world this past decade: people like Rebecca Johnson, a nurse I met in Sierra Leone who contracted Ebola, recovered and then risked her life again to save her community; and people like Yusra Mardini, the Syrian teen swimmer who pushed her damaged refugee boat to safety and then went on to compete in the Olympic Games; and, of course, people like young Malala Yousafzai, who came to the United Nations and showed us all how one book, one pen and one person could make a difference.

A perfect world may be on the far horizon, but the route to a better world, a safer world, a more trusted world, is in each and every one of us. Ten years on, I know that, working together, working united, we can get there. I count on members' leadership and commitment.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Statement by the President

The President: It is my privilege today to open the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. In exercising this privilege, I am greatly humbled, as a proud Fijian citizen, to know that this is the first time in the seven decades of the history of the United Nations that a President of the Assembly has hailed from one of the Pacific island nations.

Three hundred and sixty-one days ago in this great Hall, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted. The result of two years of intense, multilateral negotiations, the 2030 Agenda's adoption was like a beacon of hope raised to guide all humankind to a better world. With its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2030 Agenda is hugely ambitious. Imbued with a universal and transformative spirit, the 2030 Agenda sets out a master plan for us to transform our world into one in which extreme poverty has been eliminated and peaceful, well governed societies live sustainably and in harmony with our environment. Essentially, it provides for a future in which generations to come will live securely in a loving world.

How are we progressing? Our first great indication of progress is that the Paris Agreement on climate change was adopted in Paris and we are moving steadily towards its ratification. I salute the Secretary-General for his tireless work in that area and congratulate the Governments that have ratified the Agreement. Overcoming the challenges of climate change is the existential responsibility of our time. We must not delay any further, and it is encouraging to see that more energy is being produced from more affordable,

renewable sources than ever before, and more resources are going to climate adaptation.

It is heartening to see that the number of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from communicable diseases, like polio and malaria, continues to decrease. It is evident that the 2030 Agenda is being increasingly used as the framework for improved national development plans around the world. But we are far from where we need to be.

Millions of people around the globe are suffering the brutal effects of war. The crisis in Syria continues to bring immense human suffering to the Syrian people, for both those who have fled in search of sanctuary and those who have stayed under inhumane conditions. I strongly condemn the attacks on a United Nations aid convoy that was seeking to bring desperately needed food and medical supplies to people in need. The deliberate targeting of humanitarian personnel is a flagrant violation of international law and totally morally unacceptable.

Around the world, more than 60 million people are on the move, many risking their lives to flee conflict or disaster. Week after week, innocent people are falling victim to the despicable acts of violent extremists. The gap between rich and poor, between men and women, between developing countries and advanced economies remains stubbornly high. At a time when collaboration and partnership are needed more than ever, we are witnessing increasing xenophobia, divisive rhetoric and attacks on our human rights and fundamental freedoms. Meanwhile, global greenhouse-gas emissions continue to rise. Incredible damage is being done to our oceans and seas, and the window of opportunity to avert catastrophic climate change is rapidly closing.

Taken together, it is clear that the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is not yet producing the results that our world so desperately needs. What are we therefore going to do about it? There is only one answer: we must do better to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. We need to teach our young people about the Goals, because for the required transformation to occur, it must first take hold in our minds and in our values. It is our children who will be the inheritors of the Agenda's results, so every classroom around the world should be teaching the Sustainable Development Goals. I encourage all members to achieve that reality. Greater public resources must be dedicated to achieving the SDGs, either directly through domestic finance or through official development assistance such as climate financing. We need to create better regulatory environments and to require the international financial system to ensure that financing is increasingly focused on productive, green and socially responsible investment. We must support greater access for poor and marginalized communities and countries to science, technology and innovation, to trade opportunities and to more sustainable debt solutions. We can, and must, work better on sustaining peace, preventing and responding to conflict and in managing the global humanitarian and refugee crisis.

Collective action by Member States must be advanced. Strategic and inclusive partnerships must be forged to meet the global challenges we face — from climate change to conflict, from violent extremism and terrorism to the contagious diseases that threaten humankind. As President of the General Assembly, I assure the Assembly that I will do everything possible to support members in addressing those issues during the seventy-first session.

In summary, during the seventy-first session I am committed to a universal push for the implementation of all 17 SDGs. I will push for a United Nations development system that works seamlessly as one and that responds effectively to the needs of Member States for which United Nations support is essential.

In response to the crisis our beloved ocean is facing, I will oversee the preparations for the United Nations conference on SDG 14, on oceans, to be held here in the Hall and in the surrounding conference rooms from 5 to 9 June 2017. We are building the conference to be the game-changer for the way we safeguard our ocean's well-being, and I hope to see as many members attend as possible.

Beyond the 2030 Agenda, as President of the General Assembly, I am fully conscious of the responsibilities, functions and powers of this organ under Chapter IV of the Charter of the United Nations. Next week, I will travel to Colombia for the historic signing of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — a welcome agreement ending decades of civil conflict.

It is my hope that, in collaboration with Member States and the wider United Nations community, it will also prove possible over the coming months to take steps to advance other pressing agendas before the Organization: to strengthen the United Nations peace

and security pillar by enhancing the Organization's ability to prevent and respond to conflicts and threats; to advance the sustaining peace agenda as fundamental to the United Nations engagement across peace and security, development and human rights — there can be, after all, no sustainable development without sustainable peace; to combat discrimination and to further the realization of human rights so that all people are able to live free and equal in dignity and rights; to strengthen the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture and to protect the lives of the vulnerable and those most at risk of such mass violations; to strive for greater consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation; and to work towards transforming the United Nations itself by addressing the need for gender equality and parity, better geographical balance, encouraging practices that are flexible, innovative and coherent and making the Organization more effective, efficient, accountable and fit for purpose.

I take this opportunity to salute from this high rostrum the thousands of United Nations peacekeepers serving around the world, and to remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the high ideals of this institution. Blessed are the peacemakers.

As President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, I am fully committed to building on the standards of transparency and inclusiveness set by my predecessor. That will be particularly so for the process by which the new Secretary-General is appointed. Thereafter, our work will be to support a smooth transition and a strong start for the next Secretary-General. I will ensure that there are ample opportunities for early interaction between the new Secretary-General and Member States so as to build a solid working relationship with the Assembly.

During the seventy-first session, I will also seek to improve our ways of working in the General Assembly. I will look to address the effectiveness of Assembly committees to improve the coherence between the major organs, to enhance synergies and coherence of the agenda in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals and to tackle long-standing issues that are holding back the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization and embed greater transparency and ethics into all we do.

Of course, one area in particular need of attention is Security Council reform. We must have a Security Council that is structured to be able to meet the new and emerging challenges of the twenty-first century. That includes tackling the security dimensions resulting from climate change. During the seventy-first session, we must work with each other across and between traditional groups to build trust and flexibility so that we can achieve reform that is for the common good.

In conclusion, we have an expression in the Fijian language that exhorts us to look ahead and not to dwell on the grievances, the stalemates and the mistakes of the past. Today, I have touched on some of the great challenges that lie ahead for humankind. Let us prepare ourselves for them. It has been said that a politician thinks of the next election but that a statesperson thinks of the next generation. Like never before, we must look to the statesmen and stateswomen among us to guide us to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to deliver the secure and harmonious future that all of us wish for our children, grandchildren and for those who come after them.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I would like to remind members that the list of speakers for the general debate has been established on the agreed basis that statements should be no longer than 15 minutes, to enable all the speakers to be heard at a given meeting. Within this time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a reasonable pace so that interpretation in the six official United Nations languages may be provided properly.

I would also like to draw the Assembly's attention to the decision taken by the General Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged. In that connection, after delivering their statements, speakers are invited to exit the General Assembly Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The President: Finally, I should like to draw to the attention of members that during the general debate official photographs of all the speakers are taken by the Department of Public Information. Members interested in obtaining those photographs are requested to contact the Photo Library of the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Temer (*spoke in Portuguese*): Brazil brings its natural spirit of openness to the United Nations and to the world. We are a country that is built on and by the strength of diversity. We believe in the power of dialogue. We strongly advocate the principles that govern the Organization — principles that are needed now more than ever before. Today's world shows signs of uncertainty and instability.

The international system is currently experiencing what could be described as an order deficit. Reality has moved ahead faster than our collective ability to address it. From outbreaks of regional conflicts to violent fundamentalism, we face both old and new threats that we have been unable to contain. In view of the refugee crisis and the upsurge in terrorism, we cannot help but be overwhelmed by a sentiment of perplexity or bewilderment. Hotbeds of tension show no signs of fading away. A state of virtual political inaction leads to prolonged wars with no solution. The system's inability to react to conflicts further worsens cycles of destruction. The social vulnerability of so many in several countries is exploited by narratives of fear and entrenchment.

There has been a return to xenophobia, and extreme forms of nationalism are gaining ground. Different expressions of demagoguery bring about serious risks on all continents. Even in the economic arena, the fact is that today's world lacks standards that can otherwise reduce globalization's asymmetries. Many have yielded to the easy answer of protectionism. We cannot possibly shy away from such a world. On the contrary, we must join hands and unite to transform it through diplomacy — balanced but firm diplomacy, sobering but determined. Such diplomacy should be well-grounded and embracing of change. That is how Brazil has conducted diplomacy both within our region and beyond as a country that has pursued its interests without ever relinquishing its principles.

What we wish for the world is what we wish for Brazil — peace, sustainable development and respect for human rights. Those are the values and aspirations of our society. Those are the values and aspirations that guide us on the international stage. We would like to live in a world in which law prevails over force. We would like to have rules that reflect the pluralistic nature of the community of nations. We would like to have a results-oriented United Nations, capable of facing up to the major challenges of our time. Our debates and negotiations cannot possibly be confined to the Organization's rooms and halls. Instead, they should reverberate through the markets of Kabul, the streets of Paris and the ruins of Aleppo.

The United Nations cannot be reduced to a mere observation post that condemns the world's scourges. Instead, the Organization should assert itself as a source of effective solutions. Those who sowed the seeds of conflict have reinvented themselves, but multilateral institutions have not. It is for that reason that Brazil has warned that it is essential to make global governance structures more representative, many of which have by now aged and have become disconnected from reality. The Security Council must be reformed. We stand ready to overcome the current impasse surrounding that issue.

Many challenges go beyond national borders, including trafficking in drugs and weapons, and have an impact on our cities, schools and families. Fighting organized crime requires us to work hand in hand. The very safety of our citizens ultimately depends on the quality of our collective action. An example of this is the war in Syria, which continues to engender unacceptable suffering, with women and children as the main victims. A political solution can no longer be postponed. We call on the parties involved in the conflict to respect the agreements endorsed by the Security Council and to guarantee the civilian population access to humanitarian aid.

We are also concerned by the lack of prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine. Brazil continues to support a solution based on two States living in peaceful coexistence within mutually agreed and internationally

recognized borders. It is our common responsibility to give new impetus to the negotiating process.

Another reason for concern, if I may say so, is the lack of progress on the nuclear disarmament agenda. There are thousands of nuclear weapons in the world today. That amounts to thousands of threats to international peace and security. The most recent nuclear test in the Korean peninsula is a reminder of the danger that nuclear proliferation poses. Brazil can speak with the authority of a country where the use of nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes is an obligation enshrined in the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Yet not all news is bad. There are well-known examples, which have already been mentioned in today's meeting, of what can be accomplished through dialogue. We celebrate that diplomacy has prevailed on the Iranian nuclear dossier and encourage full compliance and understanding with the agreements reached. The peace accord between the Colombian government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia allows us to envisage the end of the last armed conflict on our continent. I congratulate President Juan Manuel Santos and all Colombians for that achievement. Brazil stands ready to contribute to peace in Colombia. The re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America shows that there are no eternal antagonisms or unbreakable deadlocks. We hope that closer ties will bring progress to the region as a whole, to include the economic and trade arenas. We hope that the re–establishment of relations between Cuba and the United State will be followed by the end of the economic embargo against Cuba.

This year, Brazil and Argentina celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. The Agency is the world's only binational organization responsible for applying nuclear safeguards. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has stated, the Agency is an inspiration for regional and global efforts towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Confidence-building between Brazilians and Argentines in the nuclear arena, as I have just indicated, is part of the inception of our integration experience, and of the foundation of projects like the Southern Common Market. For Brazil, Latin American integration is not only Government policy but the expression of a constitutional principle and a permanent foreign policy priority.

As we are all aware, Governments of different political inclinations coexist in our region. That is natural and sound. What is essential is that there be mutual respect and that we agree on basic common objectives, such as economic growth, human rights, social progress, security and freedom for all citizens. Those are the objectives that guide and inform the presence of the United Nations in Haiti. Since 2004, Brazil has led the military component of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and has sent more than 33,000 contingents to that Caribbean country. We trust that the United Nations presence on the ground in Haiti will focus more on developing institutions and capacity-building.

Brazil's neighbours also include our brothers and sisters from Africa, to whom we are tied by the Atlantic Ocean and by a long-standing history. This year, we will host the Summit of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries. Of the Community's nine members, six are African States. Brazil therefore looks towards Africa with friendship and respect, with a determination to undertake projects that will unite us even more.

Development is more than just an objective, it is an imperative. A developed society is one where all are entitled to high-quality public services such as education, health care, transportation and security; one where equal opportunity is assured and where access to decent work opportunities is not a privilege for a few. In a nutshell, development is paramount to dignity, and the dignity of humankind is one of the principles of the Brazilian State, as laid down in article 1 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the greatest United Nations endeavour in favour of development. Turning it into reality will require more than the sum of national efforts. Supporting developing countries will be crucial to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Prosperity and well-being today should not impair the future of humankind. Economic growth should be socially balanced and environmentally friendly. After all, we live on the same Planet. There is no plan B. We must therefore take ambitious measures under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Tomorrow, I will formally deposit Brazil's instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change. As the world's most biodiverse country, and with one of the world's cleanest energy mixes, Brazil is an environmental

powerhouse with an uncompromising commitment to the environment.

Development also depends on trade. In periods of economic crisis, protectionism often increases. It must be curbed. Protectionism is a perverse barrier to development. It reduces the number of jobs and opportunities and makes men, women and families around the world, including in Brazil, fall victim to unemployment and hopelessness. The multilateral trading system is part of the fight against that evil. Ending protectionism in agriculture is particularly important for development. We cannot keep backtracking on the implementation of World Trade Organization commitments on agriculture any longer. It is urgent to prevent sanitary and phytosanitary measures from serving protectionist purposes. It is urgent to discipline subsidies and other distortive domestic support policies in the agricultural sector. Home to a modern, diversified and competitive agriculture, Brazil contributes to food security. We produce for ourselves and we help to feed the world.

Unfortunately, the full enjoyment of human rights remains an unaccomplished aspiration in today's world. Every human being has the right to live freely, according to one's own beliefs and convictions. Such fundamental liberty, however, is disrespected every day. Persecutions, political detentions and other arbitrary acts remain recurrent in many areas of the world. Our eyes should also turn to minorities and other more vulnerable segments of our society. That is what we have done in Brazil through income-transfer initiatives and housing and education programmes, including financial aid available to students from poor families and backgrounds. We have also advocated gender equality as expressly envisaged in our Constitution. It is incumbent upon us to safeguard the rights of all.

Refugees and migrants are, more often than not, victims of human rights violations, poverty, war and political repression. Yesterday's high-level meeting cast light on some of those substantive matters. Brazil is the product of immigrants, men and women from all continents. We repudiate all forms of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. We provide shelter to refugees and migrants, as I underscored in yesterday's meeting (see A/71/PV.4B).

In a world still plagued by hatred and sectarianism, the Rio de Janeiro Olympic and Paralympic games showed that it was possible for nations to come together in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. In fact, for the first time, a delegation of refugees was able to compete in the games. Therefore, through sports, we can succeed in promoting peace, fighting exclusion and tackling prejudice.

Finally, I bring to the United Nations a message of uncompromising commitment to democracy. Brazil has just undergone a long and complex process, led by our national congress and supreme court, which ultimately led to an impeachment. I must stress that everything unfolded in full compliance with constitutional order. We offer that example as a clear indication that there can be no democracy without the rule of law with standards that apply equally to all, even the most powerful. That is what Brazil is showing the world through the process of cleansing its own political system.

We have an independent judiciary, an active public prosecutor's office and executive and legislative bodies that fulfil their duties. Individual agendas do not prevail but rather the will of institutions, under the careful oversight of a pluralistic society and a genuinely free press. Our task now consists in resuming economic growth and ensuring that Brazilian workers regain the millions of lost jobs. We are clear on the path to be followed. It is the path of fiscal and social responsibility. Trust has already been restored and a more prosperous horizon lies ahead in the near future. Our development process consists primarily of investment, trade, science, and technology partnerships. In that regard, our relations with countries of all continents will prove decisive.

I do not wish to close my remarks without addressing the Secretary-General, who will soon be leaving office. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as we all know, has devoted the last 10 years of his life to a tireless pursuit of peace, development and human rights. He can be sure that we are highly appreciative and thankful for his efforts.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, we can no longer doubt that our problems are global. There is no place for isolationism. Ours is a common destiny. At the United Nations, more than anywhere else, we can come close to the universalist ideal that drives us all. About sixty years ago, my fellow countryman, Oswaldo Aranha, stated from this rostrum that even in a world as disturbed as it was then, no one wished to see the doors of the United Nations close. He warned us all that without the United Nations, the shadows of war would descend upon humankind to relentlessly

and indefinitely eclipse the hope of so many men and women. It is in the Assembly of nations that we nurture our hope, a hope achieved through dialogue, mutual understanding and respect for others, ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Deby Itno (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, Permanent Representative of Fiji, who has been elected President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We wish him every success in discharging his mandate. Chad pledges its full support.

I would also like to congratulate and thank His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, outgoing President of the General Assembly, for his dedication and his many initiatives to strengthen the role of the Assembly, the most democratic and representative entity of the United Nations.

At the same time, on behalf of Chad and the African Union, I would like to congratulate and render a heartfelt tribute to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whose mandate will soon come to a close. His leadership, commitment and unflagging dedication during the past 10 years have contributed to buttressing the role of the United Nations and promoting its ideals.

Founded over 70 years ago by 51 Member States, the United Nations today now consists of 193 Member States. The evolution of humankind has made our States increasingly interdependent and interconnected, just as the challenges have become global and collective in nature. The world in which we live is facing multidimensional threats which prompt great concern.

Armed conflict, terrorism, climate change, mass migration, underdevelopment, poverty, and political, economic and financial crises have reached unprecedented proportions. No continent or region of the world has been spared by at least one of those scourges. Citizens of the world from all walks of life in some cases live in a perpetual state of fear and in others in a state of despair because wars, indiscriminate violence, poverty and the adverse effects of climate change are on the rise and there is slim hope of solving those problems.

The growing number of refugees and displaced persons throughout the world; the ongoing shipwrecks of makeshift boats in the Mediterranean, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives; and the Syrian tragedy, which has been unfolding before our eyes for more than five years, among other challenges, are tangible events that eloquently illustrate our collective powerlessness.

In this world of uncertainty, Africa is the most vulnerable and exposed continent. The victim of colonial plunder and affected by the numerous problems caused by underdevelopment, Africa is today under full attack from terrorism — the greatest threat of the century. Somalia, Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel in general are seriously destabilized and the danger is threatening to spread throughout the entire continent. Despite their modest means, the African Union and its member States are highly mobilized and committed to fighting this absolute evil.

That is evidenced by the great sacrifices that the African Union Mission in Somalia has made since 2004, the implementation of the Multinational Joint Task Force by States of the Lake Chad basin and Benin to fight the Boko Haram terrorist group, and the establishment of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which is a framework for security cooperation and countering all cross-border threats in the countries of the Sahel. This impetus for mobilization should be strengthened and supported by the entire international community by all means available, including physical, financial and military, as well as through intelligence-sharing. In that regard, from this rostrum I appeal to all States Members of the United Nations, particularly Africa's partners, to contribute to the African Fund Against

Terrorism created by the African Union at its Summit, held in Kigali in July.

Africa is also working with great diligence to manage the crises and conflicts besetting it by promoting a regional approach to crisis resolution, underpinned by a peace and security architecture. Such an approach, which is deserving of the firm support of the international community, seeks to strengthen the response capacity of regional and subregional organizations in the light of their geographical proximity, knowledge of the terrain and their rapid and flexible deployment capabilities. The African Union Mission in the Sudan, the African Union Mission in Somalia, the African-led International Support Mission in Mali and the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic are concrete examples of the efforts of the African Union.

The complexity of conflicts throughout the world, including in Africa, is such that no organization can resolve them alone. That is why the African Union has always advocated a strategic partnership with the United Nations to confront security challenges on the continent. The African Union has deployed all of the aforementioned operations on behalf of the international community and in deference to the purview of the Security Council. Consequently, the African Union can legitimately count on the multifaceted and financial support of the United Nations.

We welcome the fact that this long-held position of the African Union is endorsed in the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations in its 2015 report (see A/70/95), which has been unanimously praised. Accordingly, in the spirit of shared responsibility, at its latest summit the African Union adopted a measure to shoulder 25 per cent of the cost of peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council on the continent. The African Union hopes to receive the remaining 75 per cent from the United Nations peacekeeping budget, in keeping with the spirit of the division of labour and cost-sharing. The African Union anxiously awaits the start of constructive discussions with the United Nations on this proposal in order to reach an agreement that could further strengthen the exemplary partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the interests of peace and the protection of civilians in times of crisis.

The political and security situation in many African countries concerns us deeply. Mali remains a target of attacks by terrorist groups despite the presence of United Nations forces on the ground and the peace agreements reached following arduous negotiations in Algiers. The international community must undertake an in-depth analysis of the situation with a view to ending the conflict through dialogue, without losing sight of tailored and appropriate responses to the terrorist threat.

The situations in Libya and South Sudan remains extremely troubling and requires a more substantial mobilization on the part of the international community, with the vigorous engagement and coordination of the respective regional organizations involved in resolving the crises. In that respect, the joint effort of the African Union and the United Nations to deploy a civilian protection force of 4,000 men, in addition to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, is to be commended. We also call for more concerted efforts between the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for the Sudan and South Sudan and the United Nations to persuade the non-signatories of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur to commit to it.

Despite the successful holding of presidential and legislative elections, the situation in the Central African Republic remains fragile, as evidenced by the latest clashes between armed groups within the country. That situation requires a long-term follow-up, and the newly elected Central African authorities must be further supported in their efforts to normalize the situation in their country. I call on the international community to maintain and strengthen its support for peacebuilding and national reconciliation there. We also urge the political actors in brotherly countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Gabon, to prioritize dialogue and cooperation with regard to pre- and post-electoral crises. The African Union is ready to assist them in settling their disputes through peaceful means.

The serious crises affecting Iraq, Syria and Yemen call on our collective conscience concerning the many who have been killed, wounded, displaced or made refugees, as well as to the destruction of their vital infrastructure. The international community must urgently find a political solution to all of these crises through direct negotiations between the parties in conflict.

Concerning the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, we call for a definitive, just and equitable solution that guarantees security for Israel and an independent and viable State for Palestinians, urging both parties to resume dialogue and relaunch the peace process, and setting out a clear framework for future negotiations, along with a deadline, that will make it possible to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

Africa is not only a gigantic reservoir of raw materials; it is also home to more than 1 billion men and women who yearn for harmonious development accompanied by social well-being and prosperity. The international community can eradicate poverty in the world only if it upholds the commitments made within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which puts people at the very core of all concerns. The implementation of the Agenda must be an absolute priority in order to eliminate extreme poverty, fight climate change, strengthen resilience and promote sustainable economic growth that will benefit all.

In this respect, we stress the urgent need for an effective mobilization of the resources necessary to finance development in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Africa is committed to playing its part by ensuring an effective coordination of efforts as well as consistency among the goals of both Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030. No region of the world, no State can prosper alone or be surrounded by an ocean of destitution and poverty without experiencing the consequences.

The successive waves of young African migrants moving towards Europe that we see on a daily basis, thousands of whom have drowned, are a challenge to the conscience of the international community. Though we may erect barriers, build ghettos and mobilize naval forces to contain migrants, the phenomenon will not stop until the regions concerned are closely involved in a suitable collective response. The solutions outlined at the 2015 Valletta summit seem, unfortunately, to have fallen short of our expectations and of the challenges. It is not a matter of providing charity to Africa, but, rather, of establishing with it a true strategic partnership aimed at tackling common global challenges. It is not too late to begin collective and concerted action that takes on board the legitimate concerns of all the parties concerned.

One of the major challenges facing Africa is climate change and environmental issues. The advance of the desert, the silting up of the Niger river, the El Niño phenomenon in southern Africa and deforestation are all the most striking signs of climate change in Africa. Lake Chad has shrunk from 25,000 square kilometres in 1960 to less than 2,000 today; this is additional proof of the degradation of our planet's climate. This ecological disaster, which is endangering coexistence among communities and dangerously threatening food security in the Sahel, will certainly have consequences for the security and the stability of the region, as we see from the strong presence and the accelerated development of the terrorist threat.

The partnership with Africa must also be seen in the fight for the preservation of the environment, which is seriously threatened. In this respect, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, signed on 22 April by all States, creates new obligations and a structural framework for the long-term fight against climate change. There is a great deal left to do to in order to achieve tangible achievements in the implementation of the commitments undertaken by all parties according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

The Agreement will be credible only if it is accompanied by specific action aimed at bridging the enormous gap between the efforts that have been pledged and the noble objectives that are sought, including those established at Copenhagen, namely, mobilizing $100 billion by 2024 for the poorest countries.

The question of United Nations reform, and specifically that of the Security Council, remains a major concern for Africa, which, because of a historical injustice, remains marginalized in this organ. It is unfortunate that such reform, which the African Union has called for at every one of its summits for years, does not seem to prompt any interest. Nonetheless, Africa will continue to call for the creation of a more just and equitable universal Organization, while reaffirming its position on this matter as expressed in the Ezulwini Consensus.

Confidence and hope in the global solutions that the United Nations inspires will be well founded only if all nations, in their diversity, take part in their design and implementation. All of us, as in a marriage, must be faithful to humankind, for better and for worse.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chad for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obama: As I address the General Assembly in this Hall as President for the final time, let me recount the progress that we have made these last eight years. From the depths of the greatest financial crisis of our time, we coordinated our response to avoid further catastrophe and return the global economy to growth. We have taken away terrorist safe havens, strengthened the non-proliferation regime and resolved the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomacy. We opened relations with Cuba, helped Colombia end Latin America's longest war, and we welcome a democratically elected leader of Myanmar to this Assembly. Our assistance is helping people feed themselves, care for the sick, power communities across Africa and promote models of development rather than dependence. We have made international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund more representative, while establishing a framework to protect our planet from the ravages of climate change.

This is important work. It has made a real difference in the lives of our people, and it could not have happened had we not worked together. Yet around the globe we are seeing the same forces of global integration that have made us interdependent also expose deep fault lines in the existing international order. We see it in the headlines every day. Around the world, refugees flow across borders in flight from brutal conflict. Financial disruptions continue to weigh upon our workers and entire communities. Across vast swaths of the Middle East, basic security and basic order have broken down. We see too many Governments muzzling journalists, quashing dissent and censoring the flow of information. Terrorist networks use social media to prey upon the minds of our youth, endangering open societies and spurring anger against innocent immigrants and Muslims. Powerful nations contest the constraints placed on them by international law.

This is the paradox that defines our world today. A quarter century after the end of the Cold War, the world is by many measures less violent and more prosperous than ever before, and yet our societies are filled with uncertainty, unease and strife. Despite enormous progress, as people lose trust in institutions, governing becomes more difficult and tensions between nations become more quick to surface.

I therefore believe that at this moment we all face a choice. We can choose to press forward with a better model of cooperation and integration, or we can retreat into a world sharply divided, and ultimately in conflict, along age-old lines of nation, tribe, race or religion. I want to suggest today that we must go forward and not backward. I believe that as imperfect as they are, the principles of open markets, accountable governance, democracy, human rights and international law that we have forged remain the firmest foundation for human progress in this century. I make this argument not based on theory or ideology, but on facts — facts that all too often we forget in the immediacy of current events.

This is the most important fact: the integration of our global economy has made life better for billions of men, women and children. Over the last 25 years, the number of people living in extreme poverty has been cut from nearly 40 per cent of humanity to under 10 per cent. That is unprecedented, and it is not an abstraction. It means children have enough to eat; mothers do not die in childbirth.

Meanwhile, cracking the genetic code promises to cure diseases that have plagued us for centuries. The Internet can deliver the entirety of human knowledge to a young girl in a remote village on a single hand-held device. In medicine and manufacturing, in education and communications, we are experiencing a transformation of how human beings live on a scale that recalls the revolutions in agriculture and industry. As a result, a person born today is more likely to be

healthy, live longer and have access to opportunity than at any time in human history. Moreover, the collapse of colonialism and communism has allowed more people than ever before to live with the freedom to choose their leaders. Despite the real and troubling areas where freedom appears to be in retreat, the fact remains that the number of democracies around the world has nearly doubled in the last 25 years.

In remote corners of the world, citizens are demanding respect for the dignity of all people no matter their gender, race, religion, disability or sexual orientation, and those who deny others dignity are subject to public reproach. An explosion of social media has given ordinary people more ways to express themselves and has raised people's expectations for those of us in power. Indeed, our international order has been so successful that we take it as a given that great Powers no longer fight world wars, that the end of the Cold War lifted the shadow of nuclear Armageddon, that the battlefields of Europe have been replaced by peaceful union and that China and India remain on a path of remarkable growth.

I say all this not to whitewash the challenges we face or to suggest complacency. Rather, I believe that we need to acknowledge these achievements in order to summon the confidence to carry this progress forward and to make sure that we do not abandon those very things that have delivered this progress. In order to move forward, however, we do have to acknowledge that the existing path to global integration requires a course correction. All too often, those trumpeting the benefits of globalization have ignored inequality within and among nations, have ignored the enduring appeal of ethnic and sectarian identities, and have left international institutions ill-equipped, underfunded and underresourced for handling transnational challenges.

As these real problems have been neglected, alternative visions of the world have pressed forward both in the wealthiest countries and in the poorest: religious fundamentalism, the politics of ethnicity or tribe or sect, aggressive nationalism, a crude populism — sometimes from the far left, but more often from the far right — which seeks to restore what they believe was a better, simpler age free of outside contamination.

We cannot dismiss these visions. They are powerful. They reflect dissatisfaction among too many of our citizens. I do not believe those visions can deliver security or prosperity over the long term, but I do believe that these visions fail to recognize, at a very basic level, our common humanity. Moreover, I believe that the acceleration of travel, technology and telecommunications — together with a global economy that depends on a global supply chain — makes it ultimately self-defeating for those who seek to reverse this progress. Today, a nation ringed by walls would only imprison itself.

The answer cannot be a simple rejection of global integration. Instead, we must work together to make sure that the benefits of such integration are broadly shared and that the economic, political and cultural disruptions that are caused by integration are squarely addressed. This is not the place for a detailed policy blueprint, but let me offer in broad strokes those areas where I believe we must do better together.

It starts with making the global economy work better for all people and not just for those at the top. While open markets and capitalism have raised standards of living around the globe, globalization, combined with rapid progress in technology, has also weakened the position of workers and their ability to secure a decent wage. In advanced economies like my own, unions have been undermined and many manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Often, those who benefit most from globalization have used their political power to further undermine the position of workers.

In developing countries, labour organizations have often been suppressed, and the growth of the middle class has been held back by corruption and underinvestment. Mercantilist policies pursued by Governments with export-driven models threaten to undermine the consensus that underpins global trade. Meanwhile, global capital is too often unaccountable — nearly $8 trillion stashed away in tax havens, the shadow banking system that grows beyond the reach of effective oversight.

A world in which 1 per cent of humankind controls as much wealth as the other 99 per cent will never be stable. I understand that the gaps between rich and poor are not new, but just as the child in a slum today can see the skyscraper nearby, technology now allows any person with a smartphone to see how the most privileged among us live and the contrast between their own lives and others'. Expectations rise then — faster than Governments can deliver — and a pervasive sense of injustice undermines people's faith in the system.

So how do we fix this imbalance? We cannot unwind immigration any more than we can stuff technology back into a box. Nor can we look to failed models of the past. If we start resorting to trade wars, market-distorting subsidies, beggar-thy-neighbour policies and overreliance on natural resources instead of innovation, these approaches will make us poor collectively, and they are more likely to lead to conflict. The stark contrast between, say, the success of the Republic of Korea and the wasteland of North Korea shows that the central planned control of the economy is a dead end.

But I do believe there is another path, one that fuels growth and innovation and offers the clearest route to individual opportunity and national success. It does not require succumbing to a soulless capitalism that benefits only the few, but rather recognizes that economies are more successful when we close the gap between rich and poor and growth is broadly based. That means respecting the rights of workers so that they can organize into independent unions and earn a living wage. It means investing in our people, their skills, their education, their capacity to take an idea and turn it into a business. It means strengthening the safety net that protects our people from hardship and allows them to take more risks to look for a new job or start a new venture.

These are the policies that I pursued here in the United States and with clear results. American businesses have now created 15 million new jobs. After the recession, the top 1 per cent of Americans were capturing more than 90 per cent of income growth, but today that is down to roughly half. Last year, poverty in this country fell at the fastest rate in nearly 50 years. With further investment in infrastructure and early childhood education and basic research, I am confident that such progress will continue.

So just as I pursued these measures here at home, so the United States has worked with many nations to curb the excesses of capitalism, not to punish wealth, but to prevent repeated crises that can destroy it. That is why we have worked with other nations to create higher and clearer standards for banking and taxation, because a society that asks less of oligarchs than of ordinary citizens will rot from within.

That is why we have pushed for transparency and cooperation in rooting out corruption and tracking illicit dollars, because markets create more jobs when they are fuelled by hard work and not the capacity to extort and bribe. That is why we have worked to reach trade agreements that raise labour standards and raise environmental standards, as we have done with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, so that the benefits are more broadly shared.

Just as we benefit by combating inequality within our countries, so I believe advanced economies still need to do more to close the gap between rich and poor nations around the globe. This is difficult politically. It is difficult to spend on foreign assistance, but I do not believe this is charity. For a small fraction of what we spent on the war in Iraq, we could support institutions so that fragile States do not collapse in the first place and invest in emerging economies that become markets for our goods. It is not just the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do.

That is why we need to follow through on our efforts to combat climate change. If we do not act boldly, the bill that could come due will be mass migrations, cities submerged, nations displaced, food supplies decimated and conflicts borne of despair. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change gives us a framework to act, but only if we scale up our ambitions. There must be a sense of urgency about bringing the Agreement into force and helping poorer countries leapfrog destructive forms of energy.

For the wealthiest countries, therefore, a green climate fund should be just the beginning. We need to invest in research and provide market incentives to develop new technologies and then make those technologies accessible and affordable for poor countries. Only then can we continue lifting all people up from poverty without condemning our children to a planet beyond their capacity to repair it.

We therefore need new models for the global marketplace, models that are inclusive and sustainable. In the same way, we need models of governance that are inclusive and accountable to ordinary people. I recognize that not every country in this Hall is going to follow the same model of governance. I do not think that America can or should impose our system of government on other countries, but there appears to be a growing contest between authoritarianism and liberalism right now. I want everybody to understand, I am not neutral in that contest. I believe in a liberal political order, an order built not just through elections and representative government, but also through respect for human rights

and civil society and independent judiciaries and the rule of law.

I know that some countries that now recognize the power of free markets still reject the model of free societies. Perhaps those of us who have been promoting democracy feel somewhat discouraged since the end of the cold war, because we have learned that liberal democracy will not just wash across the globe in a single wave. It turns out that building accountable institutions is hard work, the work of generations. The gains are often fragile. Sometimes we take one step forward and then two steps back. In countries held together by borders drawn by colonial Powers, with ethnic enclaves and tribal divisions, politics and elections can sometimes appear to be a zero-sum game.

So, given the difficulty in forging true democracy in the face of these pressures, it is no surprise that some argue that the future favours the strong man, a top-down model, rather than strong democratic institutions. But I believe this thinking is wrong. I believe that the road of true democracy remains the better path. I believe that, in the twenty-first century, economies can only grow to a certain point until they need to open up, because entrepreneurs need to access information in order to invent, young people need a global education in order to thrive, independent media needs to check the abuses of power. Without this evolution, the expectations of people will ultimately not be met. Suppression and stagnation will set in. And history shows that strong men are then left with two paths: permanent crackdown, which sparks strife at home, or scapegoating enemies abroad, which can lead to war.

I will admit that my belief that Governments should serve the individual and not the other way around is shaped by America's story. Our nation began with the promise of freedom that applied only to the few, but because of our democratic Constitution, because of our Bill of Rights, because of our ideals, ordinary people were able to organize and march and protest. And ultimately those ideals won out and opened doors for women, minorities and workers in ways that made our economy more productive and turned our diversity into a strength. It gave innovators the chance to transform every area of human endeavour. It made it possible for someone like me to be elected President of the United States.

So, yes, my views are shaped by the specific experiences of America, but I do not think this story is unique to America. Look at the transformation that has taken place in countries as different as Japan, Chile, Indonesia and Botswana. The countries that have succeeded are ones in which people feel they have a stake. In Europe, the progress of those countries in the former Soviet bloc that embraced democracy stand in clear contrast to those that did not. After all, the people of Ukraine did not take to the streets because of some plot imposed from abroad. They took to the streets because their leadership was for sale and they had no recourse. They demanded change because they saw life get better for the people in the Baltics and in Poland, societies that were more liberal and democratic and open than their own.

So those of us who believe in democracy need to speak out forcefully because both the facts and history, I believe, are on our side. That does not mean that democracies are not without flaws. It does mean that the cure for what ails our democracies is greater engagement by our citizens, not less. Yes, in America, there is too much money in politics, too much entrenched partisanship, too little participation by citizens, in part because of a patchwork of laws that makes it harder to vote.

In Europe, a well-intentioned Brussels often became too isolated from the normal push-and-pull of national politics. Too often in capitals decision-makers have forgotten that democracy needs to be driven by civic engagement from the bottom up, not governance by experts from the top down. So these are real problems. As leaders of democratic Governments make the case for democracy abroad, we had better strive harder to set a better example at home.

Moreover, every country will organize its Government informed by centuries of history, the circumstances of geography and the deeply held beliefs of its people. So I recognize that a traditional society may value unity and cohesion more than a diverse country like my own, which was founded upon what at the time was a radical idea, the idea of the liberty of individual human beings endowed with certain God-given rights. But that does not mean that ordinary people in Asia or Africa or the Middle East somehow prefer arbitrary rule that denies them a voice in the decisions that can shape their lives. I believe that spirit is universal. If anyone doubts the universality of that desire, listen to the voices of young people everywhere who call out for freedom and dignity and the opportunity to control their own lives.

This leads me to the third thing we need to do. We must reject any forms of fundamentalism or racism or belief in ethnic superiority that makes our traditional identities irreconcilable with modernity. Instead, we need to embrace the tolerance that results from respect for all human beings. It is a truism that global integration has led to a collision of cultures. Trade, migration, the Internet — all these things can challenge and unsettle our most cherished identities. We see liberal societies express opposition when women choose to cover themselves. We see protests responding to Western newspaper cartoons that caricature the Prophet Mohammed.

In a world that left the age of empire behind, we see Russia attempting to recover lost glory through force. Asian powers debate competing claims of history. And in Europe and the United States, we see people wrestle with concerns about immigration and changing demographics, suggesting that somehow people who look different are corrupting the character of our countries. There is no easy answer for resolving all these social forces, and we must respect the meaning that people draw from their own traditions, from their religion, from their ethnicity, from their sense of nationhood. But I do not believe progress is possible if our desire to preserve our identities gives way to an impulse to dehumanize or dominate another group.

If our religion leads us to persecute those of another faith, if we jail or beat people who are gay, if our traditions lead us to prevent girls from going to school, if we discriminate on the basis of race, tribe or ethnicity, then the fragile bonds of civilization will fray. The world is too small. We are too packed together for us to be able to resort to those old ways of thinking.

We see this mindset in too many parts of the Middle East. So much of the collapse in order there has been fuelled because leaders sought legitimacy, not because of policies or programmes, but by resorting to persecuting political opposition, or demonizing other religious sects, by narrowing the public space to the mosque, where in too many places perversions of a great faith were tolerated. And these forces built up for years. They are now at work helping to fuel both Syria's tragic civil war and the mindless medieval menace of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The mindset of sectarianism, extremism, blood-letting and retribution that has been taking place will not be quickly reversed.

If we are honest, we will understand that no external power is going to be able to force different religious communities or ethnic communities to coexist for long. But I do believe we have to be honest about the nature of these conflicts. Our international community must continue to work with those who seek to build rather than to destroy. And there is a military component to that, which means being united and relentless in destroying networks like ISIL, which show no respect for human life. But it also means that in a place like Syria, where there is no ultimate military victory to be won, we are going to have to pursue the hard work of diplomacy that aims to stop the violence, deliver aid to those in need, and support those who pursue a political settlement and can see those who are not like themselves as worthy of dignity and respect.

Across the region's conflicts, we have to insist that all parties recognize a common humanity and that nations end proxy wars that fuel disorder, because until basic questions are answered about how communities coexist, the embers of extremism will continue to burn, countless human beings will suffer — most of all in that region — and extremism will continue to be exported overseas. And the world is too small for us to simply be able to build a wall and prevent it from affecting our own societies.

And what is true in the Middle East is true for all of us. Surely religious traditions can be honoured and upheld while teaching young people science and math, rather than intolerance. Surely we can sustain our unique traditions while giving women their full and rightful role in the politics and economics of a nation. Surely we can rally our nations to solidarity while recognizing equal treatment for all communities — whether it is a religious minority in Myanmar or an ethnic minority in Burundi or a racial minority right here in the United States. And surely, Israelis and Palestinians will be better off if Palestinians reject incitement and recognize the legitimacy of Israel, and Israel recognizes that it cannot permanently occupy and settle Palestinian land. We all have to do better as leaders in tamping down, rather than encouraging, a notion of identity that leads us to diminish others.

And this leads me to the fourth and final thing we need to do, and that is sustain our commitment to international cooperation rooted in the rights and responsibilities of nations. As President of the United States, I know that for most of human history, power has not been unipolar. The end of the Cold War may

have led too many to forget this truth. I have noticed as President that, at times, both America's adversaries and some of our allies believe that all problems were either caused by Washington or could be solved by Washington, and perhaps too many in Washington believed that as well.

But I believe that America has been a rare super-Power in human history insofar as it has been willing to think beyond narrow self-interest, that while we have made our share of mistakes over these last 25 years – and I have acknowledged some – we have strived, sometimes at great sacrifice, to align better our actions with our ideals. And as a consequence, I believe we have been a force for good.

We have secured allies. We have acted to protect the vulnerable. We have supported human rights and welcomed scrutiny of our own actions. We have bound our power to international laws and institutions. When we have made mistakes, we have tried to acknowledge them. We have worked to roll back poverty, hunger and disease beyond our borders, not just within our borders.

I am proud of that. But I also know that we cannot do this alone. And I believe that if we are to meet the challenges of this century, we are all going to have to do more to build up international capacity. We cannot escape the prospect of nuclear war unless we all commit to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and pursuing a world without them. When Iran agrees to accept constraints on its nuclear programme, that enhances global security and enhances Iran's ability to work with other nations. On the other hand, when North Korea tests a bomb that endangers all of us. And any country that breaks this basic bargain must face consequences. And those nations with these weapons, like the United States, have a unique responsibility to pursue the path of reducing our stockpiles and reaffirming basic norms, like the commitment to never test them again.

We cannot combat a disease like zika that recognizes no borders – mosquitos do not respect walls – unless we make permanent the same urgency that we brought to bear against Ebola – by strengthening our own systems of public health, by investing in cures, rolling back the root causes of disease and helping poorer countries develop their public health infrastructures.

We can only eliminate extreme poverty if the Sustainable Development Goals that we have set are more than words on paper. Human ingenuity now gives us the capacity to feed the hungry and give all of our children – including our girls – the education that is the foundation for opportunity in our world. But we have to put our money where our mouths are. And we can only realize the promise of this institution's founding – to replace the ravages of war with cooperation – if powerful nations like my own accept constraints. Sometimes I am criticized in my own country for professing a belief in international norms and multilateral institutions. But I am convinced that in the long run, giving up some freedom of action – not giving up our ability to protect ourselves or pursue our core interests, but binding ourselves to international rules over the long term – enhances our security. And I think that is not true just for us.

If Russia continues to interfere in the affairs of its neighbours, it may be popular at home and it may fuel nationalist fervour for a time, but over time it is also going to diminish its stature and make its borders less secure. In the South China Sea, a peaceful resolution of disputes offered by law will mean far greater stability than the militarization of a few rocks and reefs.

We are all stakeholders in this international system, and it calls upon all of us to invest in the success of institutions to which we belong. And the good news is that many nations have shown what kind of progress is possible when we make those commitments. Consider what we have accomplished at the United Nations over the past few years. Together, we mobilized some 50,000 additional troops for United Nations peacekeeping, making them nimble, better equipped, better prepared to deal with emergencies. Together we established an Open Government Partnership so that, increasingly, transparency empowers more and more people around the globe. And together, now, we have to open our hearts and do more to help refugees who are desperate for a home.

We should all welcome the pledges of increased assistance that have been made at this General Assembly gathering. I will be discussing that more this afternoon, but we have to follow through, even when the politics are hard, because, in the eyes of innocent men and women and children who, through no fault of their own, have had to flee everything that they know, everything that they love, we have to have the empathy to see ourselves. We have to imagine what it would be like for our family, for our children, if the unspeakable happened to us. And we should all understand that, ultimately, our world will be more secure if we are prepared to help those in need and the nations that are carrying the

largest burden with respect to accommodating these refugees.

There are a lot of nations right now that are doing the right thing, but many nations — particularly those blessed with wealth and the benefits of geography — that can do more to offer a hand, even if they also insist that refugees who come to our countries have to do more to adapt to the customs and conventions of the communities that are now providing them a home.

Let me conclude by saying that I recognize that history tells a different story than the one that I have talked about here today. There is a much darker and more cynical view of history that we can adopt. Human beings are too often motivated by greed and by power. Big countries for most of history have pushed smaller ones around. Tribes, ethnic groups and nation States have very often found it most convenient to define themselves by what they hate and not just those ideas that bind them together.

Time and again, human beings have believed that they finally arrived at a period of enlightenment only to then repeat cycles of conflict and suffering. Perhaps that is our fate. We have to remember that the choices of individual human beings led to repeated world war, but we also have to remember that the choices of individual human beings created the United Nations so that a war like that would never happen again. Each of us as leaders and each nation can choose to reject those who appeal to our worst impulses and embrace those who appeal to our best, for we have shown that we can choose a better history.

Sitting in a prison cell, a young Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote:

> "Human progress never rolls on the wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God."

And during the course of these eight years, as I have travelled to many nations represented here, I have seen that spirit in our young people, who are more educated and more tolerant, more inclusive, more diverse and more creative than our generation; who are more empathetic and compassionate towards their fellow human beings than previous generations. And, yes, some of that comes with the idealism of youth, but it also comes with young people's access to information about other peoples and places — an understanding unique in human history that their future is bound with the fates of other human beings on the other side of the world.

I think of the thousands of health-care workers from around the world who volunteered to fight Ebola. I remember the young entrepreneurs I met who are now starting new businesses in Cuba, or the parliamentarians who used to be just a few years ago political prisoners in Myanmar. I think of the girls who have braved taunts or violence just to go to school in Afghanistan, and the university students who started programmes online to reject the extremism of organizations like ISIL. I draw strength from the young Americans — entrepreneurs, activists, soldiers, new citizens — who are remaking our nation once again, and who are unconstrained by old habits and old conventions and unencumbered by what is, but are instead ready to seize what ought to be.

My own family is made up of the flesh and blood and traditions and cultures and faiths from a lot of different parts of the world — just as America has been built by immigrants from every shore. And in my own life in this country, and as President, I have learned that our identities do not have to be defined by putting someone else down, but can be enhanced by lifting somebody else up. They do not have to be defined in opposition to others, but rather by a belief in liberty and equality and justice and fairness.

And the embrace of these principles as universal does not weaken my particular pride in or my particular love for America — it strengthens it. My belief that these ideals apply everywhere does not lessen my commitment to helping those who look like me, or pray as I do, or pledge allegiance to my flag. But my faith in those principles does force me to expand my moral imagination and to recognize that I can best serve my own people and I can best look after my own daughters by making sure that my actions seek what is right for all people and all children, and other people's daughters and sons.

This is what I believe — that all of us can be co-workers with God. And our leadership, and our Governments, and the United Nations should reflect this irreducible truth.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kiska: Many world leaders care more about retaining power than improving the lives of their people. Those words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon were recently addressed to us, the people in this Hall. We who are joined here are incredibly privileged. Our job enables us to be in touch with the most successful and the most miserable. We can meet individuals with remarkable destinies and also the poor whose daily routine is to fight for a piece of bread or a bottle of clean water to stay alive. Each of them trusts that we will be able to understand the scope of their problems. They hope that we will never set our personal interests over the needs of our people, our countries and our planet.

Last year's decision of the international community to transform the world for good — to leave no one behind — was a clear and ambitious way of how to address these needs. We are also perfectly aware of the nature of the challenges awaiting us to decarbonize the economy, to promote inclusive and sustainable development. But too many people tend to be pessimistic when it comes to setting grand global goals. Seemingly, there are more than enough reasons for their negativity, as we witness wars, terror and suffering. We see the damaging consequences some of our actions have on the planet and the people. And we can see them online, as new technologies bring us closer than ever to each other.

In the interconnected world of social networks, bad news travels especially fast. Sometimes it is accompanied by lies, propaganda and dangerous ideologies aimed at manipulating the public, spreading hate and frustration, and creating a fearful picture of the globalized world falling apart. Maybe that is one of the reasons why so many people are sceptical about the global development goals and our ability to deliver, and why we often forget that humankind has an impressive track record when it comes to making the world a better place. Global poverty has been halved in the past two decades. People fight fewer wars and commit fewer homicides. Many more men and women have access to health care and more girls attend schools than at any time in the past.

I am sure that we are more than capable of dealing with such challenges as poverty, hunger, diseases, injustice and discrimination. With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have the best means in the history to make life on the planet as good as it gets. The success of the new Agenda will not be possible without efficient international cooperation and coordination, backed by United Nations institutions. Success will be not possible without us, the people in this Hall. At the same time, we should not forget about our very own homework — to win the hearts, minds and trust of our people.

The world has become smaller due to globalization and modern communication technologies. The problems our world faces have become more global and intertwined. Yet our social instincts have often remained local, and our sense of responsibility is often limited by our national borders. There is a real danger that many of us thought we would not see spreading again. It is the rise of nationalism, extremism, racism and intolerance in many parts of the world. I am certain that responsible leaders need to address those dark moods in our societies, because those moods are the ultimate enemy of humankind — the enemy responsible for the worst misery and bloodbath in our modern history.

One of our most obvious duties as political leaders is, without doubt, to provide for and preserve peace and development. We have established many useful institutions to progress in that effort. However, we are witnessing the largest crisis of displacement since the Second World War. There is no need for me to recall the worrying number of refugees. We hear those numbers so often that sometimes we forget that this is not a numbers game. As His Holiness Pope Francis reminds us, migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humankind. They are children, fathers and mothers — real men and women.

Every political misunderstanding and failure to find solutions leads to more people without a roof over their head, more families separated and more hungry children. It means greater temptation to set people against each other and arouse fear among them. We may have different starting positions, different experiences and even different points of view on the problem, but we all have to understand that refugees need our empathy and our help. I strongly and truly believe that it is a moral duty of every successful, modern country to help. It is a moral duty of any true political leader to think seriously about how to help those fleeing violence and death. Let us be honest here and again ask ourselves the question raised by the Secretary-General. Are we all doing enough to improve the lives of people in need, or are we more concerned about retaining our power? Are we here to serve or to be served?

Our commitment to a just and safe world is tested as we mourn with the families of the victims of terrorism, and as we struggle to wrap our minds around that source of human suffering. When a terrorist group enslaves, murders and takes hope from men, women and children, it is not a single nation's problem. It is an attack on our very core — on our humanity. It is an attempt to kill goodness in us. Terrorists do not care about dozens or hundreds of innocent victims. They target hundreds of millions of the hearts and minds of spectators around the world to cause them to fear and to hate, encourage hostility among nations and fulfil their sick vision of the clash of civilizations.

We need to stay strong in our societies and true to our core values and culture of mutual respect, peace and non-violence. We can see that it is not hard to make people fear. Sadly, it is not hard to make people hate. But we must not respond by judging people by the colour of their skin or their choice of worship. We need to halt the growing anger, prejudice and hostility towards different religions. True leadership brings hope, reinforces trust and offers sustainable solutions for safety and peaceful coexistence.

In the words of a well-known catchphrase, we should think globally and act locally. The crisis in Ukraine — in the part of the world where I come from — has entered its third year. Slovakia is very concerned about the destabilization of a neighbouring country and repeated violence in the region. I would like once again to firmly call for tangible progress in reaching a settlement of the conflict. I believe the Minsk agreements remain the only viable way out of the crisis. Slovakia is ready to continue to assist Ukraine in securing a stable, prosperous and democratic future for all of its citizens.

Not long from now, the General Assembly will appoint a new Secretary-General of the United Nations. This year, the process of selecting the next Secretary-General has been more consultative, transparent and open than ever before. My country has the extraordinary privilege of being part of the process as we have fielded our own candidate. I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation for the Member States' continued support as we approach the final stages of the selection process. Their support also proves that candidates from our region have a lot to offer in terms of potential, capabilities, knowledge and accomplishments.

We are still living in strange, contradictory times. We can upload our personal medical data for an examination by a physician on the opposite side of the globe, and yet 16,000 children die every day, mostly from preventable or treatable causes. We are using autonomous, self-driving cars, but millions of kids still cannot find their way into a classroom. Our phones, powered by artificial intelligence, are speaking to us, but one in 10 people on this planet does not have access to drinkable water.

With all our resources, all our innovative power and all our unprecedented ways of knowledge-sharing, we cannot ignore the opportunities that exist to increase global prosperity, freedom and the dignity of human beings. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been crafted on the basis of our successes and our experience. It is our task to drive the necessary change to make the world a more prosperous, healthy, inclusive and safe place. It is our task to share the wealth of our planet.

Yes, times are uncertain, but I do believe that we can succeed. As one of the Slovak priests who spent years in prison during the totalitarian period of my country's history once said, "I do not know what the future will bring, but I know now how I will act." He could say this because he was always guided by his values.

We can succeed too when we let our values guide us through difficult times — our values of humanity, solidarity and empathy — and when we, the political leaders with the privilege and power of agenda-setting, will not give up the battle for the hearts and minds of our people to remain open to humanity, solidarity and

hope, only then can our world prosper. Only then will we truly leave no one behind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Granger: The Co-operative Republic of Guyana congratulates you, Mr. Peter Thomson, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. The election of a representative of Fiji, a small island developing State, to preside over the General Assembly at this session is especially gratifying. The choice of theme for our general debate — "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world" — is most appropriate.

We thank His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, outgoing President of the General Assembly at its historic seventieth session, for his guidance of the Assembly over the past year.

Guyana commends Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his stellar stewardship of the United Nations during his decennium. The international community owes him an enormous debt of gratitude for the earnest efforts he has indefatigably exerted to alleviate human distress, promote peace and sustain development around the world.

The Secretary-General's courageous campaign to combat the adverse effects of climate change and his commitment to sustainable development have been transformative. His labours bore fruit in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in September 2015, and in the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, in April 2016.

The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement have had a massive and undeniable impact on the manner in which the world manages the environment. The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement are evidence of environmental common sense. They are excellent examples of the sort of collective action most likely to ensure a sustainable future and safety for the planet. They are harbingers of hope for everyone, everywhere, forever. The Secretary-General's leadership has irreversibly led the United Nations further along a green path. We thank him heartily.

Guyana is part of this global green movement. Our natural assets, our commitment to sustainable development, our contribution to conquering the adverse effects of climate change and our collaboration with the international community in seeking solutions to global threats have distinguished us an emergent green State. We are a State that will ensure a secure future for our people in the pursuit of a green economy. We are a State that is proud of its place as a reliable and cooperative partner in international efforts to protect the earth's environment.

Guyana recognizes the interlocking objectives of the Agenda and the Agreement. It realizes that the establishment of a green State is consistent with building climate resilience while mitigating the effects of climate change. Guyana promises to continue to work towards the Agenda's goals, particularly by contributing to limiting increases in global temperatures, and to work towards a green path of development that is in accord with the Agreement's nationally determined commitments.

Guyana serendipitously stands at the centre of the Guiana Shield, one of the world's last remaining spheres of virgin tropical rainforest. The Guiana Shield spans an area of 2.7 million square kilometres, an area larger than Greenland, and it is shared by six South American countries and territories — parts of Brazil and Colombia, all of Guyana, all of French Guiana, all of Suriname and part of Venezuela. Guyana, as a part of that Shield, is a net carbon sink. A green canopy of rainforest envelops more than 85 per cent of our land mass, the second highest percentage forest cover on earth. Guyana is pursuing a green path so as to better understand how to protect its precious biodiversity and sustainably manage its complex ecosystems.

Guyana made a covenant with the world to be an exemplar of green growth in 1989, three years before the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. We made a gift to the prospect of sustainable development and to the project of protecting our environment through a generous grant of 371,000 hectares of our pristine forests, to be used as an international model for research, training and the development of technologies that will promote the conservation and the sustainable and equitable use of tropical rainforests in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits for the people of Guyana and the world in general. The Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development, located in the centre of our country and at the heart of the Guiana Shield, survives and thrives as a testament to Guyana's commitment to sustainable development and environmental conservation.

Guyana is an important partner in the global environmental movement. It entered into an agreement with the Kingdom of Norway to provide the world with a relevant, replicable model of how the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the Role of Conservation, Sustainable Management of Forests and Enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks in Developing Countries (REDD-plus mechanism), the mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, can align the development objectives of forest countries with the world's need to combat climate change. It has also entered into agreements with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and other States, and international organizations.

Guyana reaffirms its commitment to Goal 15 of the Agenda under which States Members of the United Nations pledge to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss. Guyana is improving the management of its ecosystems and natural resources in order to conserve its forests and their rich biodiversity. We will fulfil our obligation under the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions set forth in the Paris Agreement.

Guyana will continue its research by establishing an international institute for biodiversity at the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. That institute will allow scientists and students from the Caribbean and around the world to come to our country to increase their knowledge of vital ecosystems and share in the study of the Guiana Shield and its amazing biodiversity.

Goal 13 of the Agenda calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impact. This goal envisages and encourages international cooperation to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and abate the adverse impact of climate change. The Agreement obligates Member States to take action to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse-gas emissions development in a manner that does not threaten food production.

Guyana is developing a comprehensive emissions-reduction programme as part of its responsibility to contribute to global solutions in the face of the threat of climate change. We will set aside an additional 2 million hectares of our territory for conservation purposes. Guyana is pursuing a low-carbon growth trajectory to enhance its contribution to the campaign against climate change through the preservation of its forests, within the ambit of the REDD-plus mechanism. It will contribute up to 48.7 million metric tonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalents to the global mitigation effort, through an avoided-emissions programme.

The Agreement on climate change and the Agenda both emphasize the importance of financial flows in supporting the efforts of States pursuing a green path to development, so that they can meet their adaptation and mitigation obligations and implement the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions. I must state, however, that all our efforts — nationally, regionally and globally — for the advancement of development in an environment of peace and stability, are being challenged by the territorial ambitions of our neighbour, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Guyana celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its independence this year. Regrettably, Venezuela acknowledged this anniversary by reasserting, on 26 May, our independence day, its repudiation of a border treaty that it had solemnly signed 117 years ago and ratified and respected for over 60 of the years since then.

I addressed the Assembly last year and warned of the danger that Venezuela posed to the peace and security of our region due not to its internal instability, but to its external assault on Guyana's sovereignty and territorial

integrity (see A/70/PV.16). I placed my hopes in the fact that the process for the final resolution of Venezuela's unworthy territorial claims rested now in the hands of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Since my address last year, Venezuela has used every means to stall, as it has intensified its aggression against Guyana and thwarted all of the Secretary-General's efforts to pursue a way forward, at least in terms of a process that would lead to a final resolution of the controversy.

Guyana stands ready to have the International Court of Justice reach a final determination on the matter. We will work resolutely with the Secretary-General in his final months of office, and with his successor, to free Guyana from this surreal burden. In the Geneva Agreement of 1966, Venezuela agreed that the Secretary-General would determine the means of settlement of this controversy, including by judicial settlement. Yet Venezuela defies his every effort to fulfil that commitment.

The United Nations cannot be a dispassionate party to a threat to peace anywhere and to a challenge to the law of nations. Venezuela's territorial claim is such a challenge. It strikes at the heart of the United Nations. It strikes at the heart of the United States trusteeship of the law of nations. It strikes at the heart of the United Nations Charter, which the Secretary-General is sworn to uphold. Guyana, a small State, must look to the United Nations for protection against threats to its security, for intervention, for peace and for respect for international law.

My plea for international understanding of our plight has nothing to do with Venezuela's internal situation. The ordinary people of Venezuela are our sisters and brothers. Their pain touches our hearts, and we wish them early relief from their agony. However, Venezuela's claims are a threat to Guyana's existence as an independent nation. They are a scandalous revival of the disease of the *conquistadores* that once plagued Venezuela's own history. They are a crime against our humanity, clothed in the verbiage of national honour.

I also wish to iterate Guyana's ongoing support, within the context of the preservation of sovereignty and its link with sustainable development, for the complete removal of the commercial, economic and financial blockade imposed by the United States against another Caribbean country, the Republic of Cuba. We cannot commit to policies that transform our economies with a view to providing development for our peoples and not demonstrate the political will necessary to change systems that are in direct contradiction to those policies.

Guyana is on a path to becoming a green State. However, its efforts — and those of other small States — will be derailed unless there is collective commitment by the greater part of the international community to collaborate with those States determined to pursue a low-carbon, low-emissions path to sustainable development and to stopping the rise of global temperatures.

The road from Stockholm in 1972 to Paris in 2015 has been long and difficult. However, the words of the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment remain as relevant in 2016 as they were 44 years ago, in 1972:

> "A point has been reached in history when we must shape our actions throughout the world with a more prudent care for their environmental consequences. Through ignorance or indifference we can do massive and irreversible harm to the earthly environment on which our life and well-being depend. Conversely, through fuller knowledge and wiser action, we can achieve for ourselves and our posterity a better life in an environment more in keeping with human needs and hopes... To defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind ..." (*A/CONF./48/14/Rev.1, para. 6*).

The General Assembly at the seventy-first session now has the opportunity and the obligation to commit to measures to defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations, thereby making the road forward into the future an easier one for posterity. Venezuela's aggression against Guyana should not be allowed to threaten our children's future.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Qatar.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the duties of the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I wish you every success in fulfilling your tasks. I also wish to express our appreciation to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his efforts during his presidency of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. I also wish to extend our profound thanks to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for the efforts he has undertaken to achieve United Nations goals during his tenure.

The international community is facing many challenges and unresolved regional and international crises that have become a hindrance to regional and international development and stability. Some countries continue to pursue an approach with actions that go beyond the framework of international legitimacy against the backdrop of international negligence in the implementation of Security Council resolutions. It is no longer possible to overlook the weakness of the United Nations legal and institutional system and its inability in many cases to apply standards of justice and fairness in the functioning of its mechanisms. There is a persistent recurring pattern that marks all these crises: the selectivity of the Security Council in addressing problems, especially when it comes to the use of force by countries in international relations.

After more than seven decades of Israeli occupation of Arab territories, the Palestinian cause is at standstill, waiting for a just solution. The Government of Israel has not only rejected the resolutions of international legitimacy and the comprehensive Arab Peace Initiative, but it also seeks to impose a fait accompli through long-term plans to build settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem. It has founded its occupation on discrimination and racial segregation. It has established two legal systems under its sovereignty — one for the occupiers and another for those languishing under occupation.

Against the backdrop of the world's silence and the Arab States' involvement in their own current issues, Israel's leaders may believe that they have succeeded in their endeavour. However, they have utterly failed to resolve the issue. The Palestinian people are now more devoted to their rights than ever. Furthermore, the Arab peoples cannot accept any kind of normalization of relations with Israel as long as Israel proceeds with the occupation and its related practices and before a just solution to the Palestinian cause is achieved.

Besides, what will Israel do with the millions of Palestinians who are living on their own land and are increasing in number and resourcefulness? The options are clearly narrowing. Israel has either to opt for the two-State solution or to establish a system of apartheid. Does Israel really think that it could maintain a system of apartheid in the twenty-first century? Eliminating the occupation has become an urgent political and security prerequisite and an international obligation towards a people whose land was occupied and homeland confiscated and whose suffering is exacerbating the situation.

The Security Council bears a special responsibility to impose international legitimacy and consensus with respect to the negotiations on the basis of a two-State solution, including the establishment of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the pre-1967 borders. Meanwhile, it is necessary to cease settlement activities, respect the legal status of Al-Quds, lift the unjust siege on the Gaza Strip and end the Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan.

In the past, from this very rostrum, we have warned that inaction in addressing crises will only increase their intensity and complexity and consequently pose a threat to international security. Today, more than five years after the outbreak of the Syrian crisis and in the aftermath of the destruction of most of Syria's cities by the Al-Assad regime, we are meeting again in this Hall. As a result of the crisis, the number of refugees has doubled and the quest for refuge has become transcontinental in scope. Syria is now importing terrorist and sectarian organizations and militias that pose a regional and international threat.

Everyone knows that the Syrian revolution started as a popular and peaceful uprising against a repressive dictatorial regime and that the great people of Syria face death or years of torture in prison if they attend

peaceful demonstrations against the regime. During this period, the Syrian authorities have deliberately tried to turn the revolution into a violent one. It has also acted under the guise of political rhetoric to split the Syrian people into factions, but the people have responded with the chant, "the Syrian people are one". In contrast, the regime's declared slogan was "Al-Assad alone, or we will burn the country down". Many people may not have realized that this slogan is the de facto project of the regime and remains its only programme.

Theoretically, the majority of the countries of the world have stood by the Syrian people, but in practical terms, Syria has been abandoned, supported only by some loyal friends. Red lines had been set for the regime, but it violated them, and those who set the red lines did nothing. The red lines continued to shift until the regime became aware that there were no limits on what it could do without accountability.

It is true that violent radical forces that have nothing to do with the objectives of the Syrian revolution have entered the Syrian arena, refuse to take up revolution's banner and fight against the rebels more than against the regime. There have been many violations, but these phenomena, which have marred the revolution, cannot be understood without also considering the barbaric policy of repression applied by the Syrian regime and the inability of the international community to protect civilians against the use of chemical weapons, bomb barrels and torture.

The city of Daraa presented a model of peaceful revolution, exemplified at the beginning by the tossing of flowers at soldiers, but after massacres claiming the lives of hundreds of innocent people, mostly women and children, the city was forced, like other cities, to defend itself more forcefully. Since then, Daraa has been reeling under non-stop shelling and a starvation siege, despite the fact that it was never controlled by any radical or takfiri organization, and its revolutionaries have not committed any violations.

Why then are the inhabitants of Daraa being displaced while the international community does nothing? Why was no warning issued before the regime began its shelling and depopulation efforts, when warnings have been issued elsewhere, for example, prior to the recent bombing against forces in Al-Hasakah province? We consider the latter warning to have been an appropriate one, but no analogous action was taken with respect to Daraa, Muadamiyat Al-Sham, Madaya, Al-Zabadani or other towns also threatened with displacement. Many Syrian citizens are wondering the same thing.

We cannot fool ourselves or our people because it is unacceptable that the will of the international community is crippled when it comes to the perpetrators of crimes against humanity. It is simply not true that it was impossible to protect the Syrian people. The international community has allowed illegal military interventions to be undertaken to overthrow regimes in our region, which is still taking its toll on us. Unfortunately, while many of us share responsibility for that situation, the international community has not stepped in to protect a defenceless people, despite the fact that this people has proved time and again that it could change the regime on its own if they were protected by the international community from bombardment.

Putting an end to this humanitarian disaster has become a political and moral necessity. The Security Council has a historical and undeniable responsibility to stop the bloodshed of the Syrians by halting the barbaric bombings and blockades of cities, by repatriating the displaced and by taking measures to resume the political process within the framework of resolution 2254 (2015) and decisions based on the first Geneva Convention, which call for the formation of a transitional ruling body with full powers to meet the aspirations of the Syrian people and maintain the unity and sovereignty of Syria, on the basis of equal rights for all citizens of Syria, without discrimination on the basis of faith, creed, ethnicity or race.

The Gulf region has strategic importance at both regional and global levels. This region is undergoing several crises that vary widely in character but are similar at the core. Constructive dialogue must be undertaken if solutions to them are to be found. To achieve the desired result, dialogue between countries must be based on the principles of good-neighbourliness, mutual respect and non-interference in the affairs of others. The success of dialogue among parties within a State, as we have seen in Iraq, requires giving priority to political and social consensus and strengthening the concept of full and equal citizenship before the law, leaving aside all forms of sectarianism.

With respect to Yemen, the State of Qatar renews its support for the return of legitimacy as the only way to ensure its security, unity and stability. There is no doubt that the negligence of the international

community in implementing resolutions of the Security Council, especially resolution 2216 (2015), has given some political forces in Yemen the opportunity to carry out coup-related actions that have hampered reaching the desired political solution that would satisfy the Yemeni people's yearning for unity and stability.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the efforts of my brother, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, who has sponsored the Yemeni negotiations hosted by his country. We will continue to support the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen as well as the international efforts undertaken to resume political consultations among Yemeni parties in order to reach a political settlement, in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and resolution 2216 (2015).

Although the situation in Libya is still turbulent, we look forward to restoring stability through the efforts of the Presidential Council and the present Government backed by the international community. We also look forward to confronting terrorism and tackling its serious effects. The State of Qatar has contributed to the success of the international political solution. We reaffirm our support for all efforts aimed at strengthening the Libyan national accord and warn that instability could deal a glancing blow to what has been achieved heretofore and undermine United Nations efforts aimed at promoting national reconciliation and led by the Security Council.

We are surprised to note that some countries support forces in Libya that have rejected the international solution and are acting to thwart resolution 1970 (2011) by force, despite the fact that the resolution provides for imposing sanctions on such forces. Certain forces have placed themselves under the authority of the Presidential Council and are engaged in combating terrorism, but others have rejected the international solution and sought to exploit the volatile situation by occupying oil-export terminals while the world looks on, silent. Is this a proper way to encourage Libyans to fight terrorism?

The terrorism we are facing is a threat to our peoples, countries and economic and social achievements, thereby requiring that we intensify our efforts to combat it. All of us are mindful that success in countering this dangerous phenomenon is not easily reached, but it is not impossible either, especially when there is the political will to address the social roots of this abhorrent phenomenon. We need to understand the circumstances that, in an atmosphere of desperation and deadlocked perspectives, give rise to radical ideologies.

We need to protect the young people who are targeted by extremist groups. Fighting terrorism is not confined to the security dimension; rather, we need to go a step further and promote the values of tolerance, culture, plurality and dialogue, while taking into account the right of people to resist occupation, which is a right that has been enshrined in international laws, covenants and norms.

To restore our credibility, we must carefully define terrorism and diligently stand against it, if we are to educate our young people and mobilize our communities against this scourge. The definition we choose should not vary according to the identity of the perpetrator or the victim or because of a particular political interest. We have seen cases, for example, where a certain organization, misbranded as terrorist when it was simply a political adversary, was later embraced as a friend when it became a temporary ally.

Distinctions should not be made about the lives of civilians, whether they be from Istanbul, Gaza, New York or Aleppo. No life is more important or valuable than any other life. The double standards used to address this phenomenon, by linking terrorism to a certain faith or culture or by absolving Governments that engage in it from being described as terrorist, complicates efforts to uproot the phenomenon and reinforces pretexts being used by terrorists to justify their actions. In this context, and as a natural consequence of our policy of rejecting radicalism and terrorism based on our values and culture and the teachings of the true Islamic religion, we reiterate our support for the efforts to eradicate the phenomenon of terrorism that are undertaken within the framework of international legitimacy.

Respect for and the protection and promotion of human rights constitute one of the basic pillars of the United Nations Charter's stated purposes and principles and are consistent with the Arab and Islamic principles and values that treasure humankind and honour it as a creation of almighty God. The State of Qatar is eager to implement its obligations at both the national and international levels to defend collective and individual rights of people and promote human rights around the world.

Accordingly, one of the most important challenges we must act upon today is that of protecting refugees. This challenge requires cooperation and joint action in order to uproot the causes of forced displacement. We must urgently provide aid and assistance as a humanitarian duty incumbent upon us all. Qatar's development and relief contribution has reached more than 100 countries worldwide, and we continue to coordinate with Governmental and non-governmental agencies to provide even more development and relief aid.

Qatar supports over 10 million children around the world and promotes the potential of some 1.2 million Arab young people, so as to empower them to be active and productive in their communities. Over the past five years since 2011, the value of the economic assistance provided by the State of Qatar has increased threefold to reach 13 billion Qatari riyals.

The State of Qatar will continue to be a venue for dialogue and conflict resolution by peaceful means. It will also remain committed to international action, cooperation and partnership within the framework of the efforts of the international community to counter shared humanitarian challenges.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Amir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. El Haycen (Mauritania), Vice–President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Macri (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to be here today for the first time to represent the Argentine Republic before the General Assembly.

We are living in a time of great global transformation, where changes take place at an increasingly rapid pace and provide us with new opportunities. In the twenty-first century we are faced with a continuous challenge, namely, that of adapting to the new realities of global interdependency. Building a modern international order is an ongoing task in which we are all protagonists.

The principles of the Organization guide us to encourage dialogue and cooperation between our countries in order to achieve development, peace and international security. In the first 71 years of the United Nations, important advances have been made. However, there is still much to be done. The United Nations has proposed a horizon towards which we should advance. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a goal that we should approach collectively.

I am proud to represent a country that has contributed to the international legal framework, driving advances in human rights, humanitarian rights and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. With the Sustainable Development Goals in mind, it makes us proud that our Governmental priorities are in line with those of the international community. In Argentina, we have set ourselves three main objectives.

Our first goal is to move towards zero poverty. That means becoming a country with equal opportunities, where our children can shape their future and where every Argentinian is able to develop his or her potential. A country like ours, which is a food–producing powerhouse, cannot accept the fact that there are people going hungry anywhere the world.

Our second goal is to defeat drug trafficking. The world drug problem, addiction and violence associated with organized crime requires that we work together towards a comprehensive agenda, based on human rights and focused on both supply and demand.

Our third goal is to unite Argentinians through dialogue, respect for the rule of law and the strengthening of democracy. For in the twenty-first century, the quality of political leadership is measured by the ability to build bridges and create trust. These are elements that every society needs to properly function. Argentinians have chosen that path, namely,

that of trusting one another, engaging in dialogue and speaking honestly to each other.

An important step in this direction was working on the problems of the past in order to be able to look towards the future. We have rebalanced the macroeconomy and began to strengthen relations with our neighbouring countries. We are establishing mature links with other countries and multilateral organizations, and we are already starting to see results. We have returned to international credit markets, and many companies have demonstrated that they trust Argentina. New investments are announced every day, which will lead to jobs and put the country on track to expand its economy. Argentines are ready to enter into the twenty-first century and assume our role in the international community.

However, we cannot achieve any of those goals alone. We have to work together, starting with our neighbours. I am from a region that thinks of itself as a common neighbourhood with shared challenges. In recent years, Latin America has made huge efforts to reduce poverty, thanks to robust social policies and to the very favourable international economic conditions. But today the context is different. All of our countries have experienced diminished growth, while global trade has shown weak performance. At the regional level, the balance of trade is less favourable and inflation punishes those who have less.

But we in Argentina are optimistic. We know that, in order to grow inclusively, Latin America must count on a tremendous amount of human talent as well as incomparable natural wealth. While in the world there are trends that generate worry and uncertainty, encouraging news is coming from our region, such as the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States and the peacebuilding process in Colombia. In addition, we see conditions for creating a corridor of peace from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean throughout the region, which will contribute to regional stability and prosperity.

But the challenges of global governance in the twenty-first century do not exclusively belong to some countries or regions; they concern everyone. We must cooperate, while thinking globally and acting locally and without losing sight of the first principle of this Organization, which is based on the sovereign equality of all of its Members. A world with more voices is a more just world. That is why it is important that we continue building a system based on clear rules that reflect diversity and plurality and that facilitate consensus.

Climate change is the greatest, most important challenge that humankind faces. Only if we are aware of that fact will we be able to make progress without jeopardizing our future and the future of future generations. We in Argentina are betting ambitiously on renewable energy to develop our potential in areas such as solar, wind and biomass energy generation. We signed the Paris Agreement and we are proud of being one of the first countries to complete the ratification process. That is why we call upon the international community to put forth its greatest efforts so that we can soon see the Agreement enter into force, which is so important for our future.

Another major challenge is the problem of refugees. Although a year ago we made a commitment to leave nobody behind, the images we see today hurt and worry us. This reality calls for us to do more. Our White Helmets are widely recognized for their commitment to humanitarian matters, which is why, last May, Argentina was present in the Syrian conflict zone to offer assistance at a refugee camp in Lebanon. I would like to announce that we are going to accept even more refugees from Syria and from its neighbouring countries, favouring families with children. We have established a national cabinet of ministers charged with broadening the existing humanitarian programme, which coordinates ministries and Governmental departments and addresses security measures and full social integration. We will be able to gradually increase our ability to receive more people to the extent that financial support, technical assistance and international logistical support allow us to do.

Gender equality is also a primary goal of ours, upon which we have to work with conviction and political determination. Argentina is making the full empowerment of women its State policy. We have established a national action plan for prevention and assistance for women at risk in order to put an end to violence against women in all of its forms. We are working with a cross-cutting approach so that women will have the same social, political, economic and cultural opportunities in the country as men. In this regard, we are grateful for the support that Susana Malcorra, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, has received as a candidate to be the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. In the twenty-first century, having a

woman as the head of the Organization would be a very encouraging example.

When the Organization was founded, countries assumed the commitment of maintaining international peace and security. However, we live in a world that is increasingly violent, where radical extremism threatens innocent people and vulnerable populations. It should be remembered that, in 1992 and in 1994, Argentina was a victim of international terrorism, with two attacks, for which we hope to receive greater international cooperation in clarifying events and punishing those responsible. My country condemns any group that through its actions aims to promote terror in any part of the planet.

In recent years, this phenomenon has worsened. To stop it, international cooperation is indispensable. We have to promote development both inside and outside of our countries because development does not stop at the border. Growth with inclusion, dialogue and tolerance — and the creation of opportunities — all help to reduce the marginalization and humiliation that fuels the recruitment of terrorists.

Dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes make up the cornerstone of the foreign policy of a democratic Argentina. That is why I reiterate our call for dialogue with the United Kingdom, as called for in many resolutions of this Organization, so as to amicably resolve the sovereignty dispute that we have had for almost two centuries over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. We have shown interest in advancing our bilateral relationship, which can and should be mutually beneficial. That is why we trust that it will be possible to find a definitive solution to this prolonged dispute.

I would like to conclude with a thought. Argentina, which has just celebrated 200 years of independence, is a country that has always opened its doors to men and women from around the world seeking a better life. There is a piece of each part of the world in my country. We coexist peacefully — Christians, Jews and Muslims. Diversity enriches our society, and we embrace openness within a world where fragmentation is burgeoning. Let us say to the world, we need not fear interdependency. This world is our shared home, which is why we must take care of it. We must learn to coexist peacefully, just as Pope Francis has called upon on us to do. Fostering a sense of integration and working together will only strengthen us. Let us continue to build networks and bridge gaps. The members of the Assembly can count on Argentina. We have much to say and to contribute.

Please allow me to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his work in leading the Organization. His legacy has difficult challenges, which is why we must continue with our efforts. Over the years, the United Nations has shown us the importance of pursuing a better world. Now it is time for us to put forth all of our creativity and political will to make our vision of a better world a reality.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Hollande (*spoken in French*): It is always an honour for me to address the General Assembly. It is also a responsibility — above all given the serious and worrying situation in the world. I stand before those present on behalf of France to issue several appeals. First, I would like to ask all members to do everything possible to implement the historic Agreement that was signed in Paris on 12 December 2015. The Agreement was historic because the conference was held at a time when Paris, the capital of France, had been struck by terrorist attacks. The Agreement was historic because, for the first time, the assembled international community agreed to make a commitment to reducing global warming and mobilizing financing, while

allowing the most vulnerable countries to make an energy transition.

And yet, standing before the Assembly, let me state once again that despite the momentous nature of the Agreement, there is no time to lose. The past two years have been the hottest known to humankind since records began. Admittedly, in April 2016, right here with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, an agreement was signed with 175 countries. But everyone here knows that it will come into force only if it is ratified by 55 per cent of countries, representing 55 per cent of greenhouse-gas emissions. The United States and China have announced their decision to ratify, which is very important. Nothing would have been possible without the participation and the commitment of those two countries, which are the largest emitters of carbon dioxide. France itself will notify the United Nations tomorrow that it has completed its ratification procedure. I appeal to all members to speed up their ratification procedures so that the goal is met by the end of the year.

The twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-21) was a conference of decisions. The twenty-second session, to be held in Marrakech, should be a conference of solutions. It is a question of implementing the International Solar Alliance, fighting desertification, protecting the seas and also setting a carbon price.

However, the appeal I want to issue to the Assembly, following this climate agreement, is an appeal for Africa. Africa is a continent full of promise, but its development could be hindered by climate change, migration, conflict, war and terrorism. The continent has a bright future; however, it may also be the one to cause growing insecurity, and that insecurity targets, first and foremost, Africans themselves.

That is why, on behalf of France, I am proposing a 2020 agenda for Africa. The plan should make it possible for all Africans to gain access to electricity. Two thirds of Africans today are deprived of it. That is an injustice, but above all it impedes sustainable growth in Africa. What is at stake, therefore, is responding to the needs of 15 per cent of the world population. What is at stake is enabling Africans to benefit from their immense potential for development. What is at issue here is reducing population displacements, that is, migration, which leads to the destabilization of both countries of origin and destination.

That is why, at the Paris Conference, I launched the African Renewable Energy Initiative. Ten donors — and I want thank them here — pledged to donate $10 billion by 2020. France has assumed 20 per cent of that amount, or €2 billion. Europe has decided on an external investment plan, which could reach — still with a view to providing Africans with access to electricity — nearly €40 billion, and even double that amount if European Union member States contribute as well. I call on all countries to join that effort. I am not just calling for solidarity here — for this is a mutual investment that will benefit the whole world — I call for this to happen as soon as possible.

But there will be no development in Africa unless the continent's security is ensured. When I committed France to acting in Mali, it did so with an awareness of its responsibility. We had to prevent terrorist groups from taking over an entire country and destabilizing an entire region. Today, that threat has been rolled back and Mali is regaining its territorial integrity. But other groups, including Boko Haram and Al-Qaida, are emerging to threaten the security of many countries in West Africa, the Sahel and the Lake Chad region. There too, France is supporting military forces with training, information-sharing and assistance in the fight against terrorism. We are doing so, for instance, in the Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Benin and Cameroon. We should expand such efforts along with the United Nations and the African Union.

Let us be clear — the security of Africans has to come from Africans themselves if we want to avoid external intrusion and interference. My appeal for development and renewable energy is also a call for the security of Africans, for equipping their armies and giving them the means to respond, and for these African nations to organize their own development in a free and sovereign manner.

The last call I wish to make here is perhaps the saddest of all. It is for Syria. The Syrian tragedy will go down in history as a disgrace for the international community if we do not end it quickly. Aleppo is today a martyred city, and this is how it shall remain in historical memory. Thousands of children have died in bombings, entire populations are starving, humanitarian convoys are being attacked, and chemical weapons are being used.

I have one thing to say in this regard — enough is enough. Just like in February, the ceasefire held for only a few days. It ended practically the day after its announcement, before its terms were even understood. The regime is responsible for its failure and cannot be exonerated for mistakes that could have been made by others. I would say to its foreign supporters — and we all know who they are — that they need to compel the regime's hand to peace. If they do not then they, alongside the regime, shall bear responsibility for the division and chaos in Syria.

The Security Council must meet as soon as possible. It should not be a theatre of fools — in other words, a place where responsibility can be evaded and where some can impede its work in order to protect a regime while they should be seeking a solution with us. France has four demands. First, we must first impose the ceasefire in line with the decisions that have been taken. That is the precondition. Secondly, we need to ensure the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid to Aleppo and other martyred cities. That is the priority. Thirdly, we must ensure the resumption of political negotiations along the lines of the transition established in 2012. That is the solution. Fourthly, we must sanction the use of chemical weapons. That is justice.

If we take these decisions and act now, there will be a solution for Syria. In fact, it will be more than a solution; there will finally be hope for refugees and displaced persons. There will finally be action that will allow Syria to maintain its territorial integrity. We are also determined to see an intervention in Iraq that will help to free the entire country from the Da'esh occupation of its territory. If we decide to act effectively against terrorism, we can prevent further terrorist attacks around the world. The risk is chaos and division, and it exists beyond Syria. It also exists in Libya. Our priority must be to re-establish the State around the Government of National Accord led by Prime Minister Al-Sarraj — a goal for which France is working with its partners and the United Nations.

We cannot sit back and do nothing. That would be playing into the hands of the forces, terrorists in particular, that aim to destabilize the world. France shall never resign itself, even if it is difficult — especially if it is difficult — and that is why it has taken the initiative to contribute to seeking a solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Of course, no one can impose a solution on the parties, but once again, resigning ourselves to the status quo involves taking a risk. It means allowing settlement to take place once again. It means once again allowing unjust, unfair and unacceptable violence to take place. The objective, therefore, is to meet here at the end of the year and hold a conference at which Israelis and Palestinians can assume their responsibilities to negotiate.

This same spirit led me, along with Chancellor Merkel, to seek a solution in Ukraine. It led to the creation of the Normandy format, which allowed us to come to an agreement in Minsk. Today, we must do everything we can to ensure that the agreement is implemented; if we do not, there will be renewed violence and perhaps even the resumption of war. I recall that this conflict has claimed more than 6,000 victims. I have therefore taken the initiative, along with the Chancellor of Germany, to bring together the Russian and Ukrainian Presidents in the weeks to come to promote progress in the implementation of the Minsk accords.We will not abandon that goal. We will renounce no initiative that we think may be useful.

I have raised the issue of terrorism, which threatens every country of the world. Long is the list of all those whom it has impacted in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and even Oceania. No country can claim to be immune to the threat of Islamist terrorism, fundamentalism and fanaticism, which have seduced and radicalized lost individuals within our societies. There is no sea or wall that can protect a country from this tragedy and the scourge of terrorist action, attacks or aggressions. Terrorism thrives on open conflicts that have remained unsolved for too long. It has provoked a wave of refugees and undermined international order, borders that we thought fixed, law that we thought we could maintain and the collective security that was the very principle of the United Nations.

In the face of these dangers, France once again turns to the United Nations. The United Nations has shown its effectiveness with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which many thought was impossible. United Nations peacekeeping operations have never been as numerous as they are now.

However, if we want to act to eradicate terrorism, we will need to make decisions and not merely talk of solidarity when a friendly country is attacked or merely express compassion for the victims. We must shoulder responsibilities whenever that can be useful. That is what France does. Not because it is attacked — today, as I have said, every country is a target for terrorism. No, France does it because it is a permanent member of the Security Council and its role is about acting, not

creating obstacles. France does it because it has one great idea, the idea that it has upheld throughout its history — bringing freedom, democracy and justice to the world. It is because France puts its policies at the service of a single goal — peace — and talks to everyone involved. It is because France is an independent nation that respects the law and has no enemies other than the forces of hatred and intolerance that use a betrayed religion to create fear. It is because we must fight the populists who exploit distress in order to divide, separate, stigmatize and pit religions against one another, risking confrontations that would have terrible consequences for cohesion in our societies. France is a secular country that proclaims itself as such but that speaks to every religion and guarantees freedom of worship on its soil, because the only interests we have in the world are stability, development and the future of our planet.

That is why France is so committed to the United Nations and demonstrates it every day. I want to pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly, to all who dedicate themselves to the United Nations, beginning with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who for 10 years has led this difficult mission on behalf of all of us and enabled us to advance its cause. And that is also why, in the face of the major challenges I have mentioned, especially Syria and the fight against terrorism, I expect the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities. There comes a moment for every generation and public official when the only question worth asking is whether we have made decisions — and whether they are good decisions. The countries here are all different sizes, at different levels of development and with different sensitivities and beliefs, but they should have only one goal and one demand, which is that the world should rise to the challenges facing the planet.

That is why I want to appeal to all those here — to call for implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, for ensuring that Africa and all Africans have electricity and better development, and for peace in Syria, because it is so urgently needed. That is why I believe in the United Nations, and that is why both France and I are sending a universal message.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: I am delighted and happy to be addressing the General Assembly today, and I would like to join my fellow leaders in congratulating the President on his election as its leader. The world has shown its confidence in him, and we are confident that he will steer the ship to the shore of our dreams. His election also testifies to our belief in the equality of our Member States, irrespective of their size.

I would also like to sincerely commend His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his exceptional leadership during his tenure of office. We wish him every success in his future endeavours. I believe we will find an equally competent person to replace him. I have also noted with appreciation that the process of selecting the Secretary-General has, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, begun to address issues of transparency and democracy. If our job is to promote the political virtues of transparency and democracy around the world, we must indeed also be the first to show ourselves to be transparent and democratic.

We have engaged in a unanimous drive to transform our world. We have agreed that our road to a better world must follow the signposts of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which show us the road to ending poverty in the world. Today, we gather to look back on the road of progress and to renew our commitment to pursue those Goals to the end.

The mission of every generation should be to leave our world a better place for subsequent generations.

But our generation faces mountains of challenges. Our world stands in great peril. Innocent souls continue to suffer from the tragedy of wars. Many lives are maimed, mutilated or cut short. Political instability continues to shake the foundations of our dreams. Conflicts have scattered communities and driven them from their homes in endless migrations. We are caught in unending cycles of suffering, violence, terrorism, radicalization, extremism, abductions and human trafficking. That is a story that we can have no pride in recounting to the next generations. Our world is living a story of indignity and shame. Our planet is in great danger. Everywhere, global warming threatens our existence with hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, wildfires, extreme flooding and droughts, dangers that threaten the fragile economies of Africa and the Third World everywhere. Africa, and the rest of the developing world, is suffering from dehumanizing poverty, the pain of hunger, disease, inequalities and gender imbalances.

Most of these are tragedies and challenges of our own creation. And the solutions lie in our hands. The choices for human destiny around the world lie with us in the Assembly. Those challenges must be resolved by us, for nobody else can resolve them. It must be done here, or nowhere else. It must be now, or never.

We have risen to the occasion of our times and begun the journey of conquest with the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. But we have only just begun. The sustainability of our pursuit and the attainment of our goals depend upon our common understanding and our walking together as a community of humankind. Malawi is doing its part and will continue to do its part. We continue to guarantee basic human rights because we can progress only with people who are free. We offer every care to our brothers and sisters who seek refuge in Malawi because we have a duty to humankind. We ensure peace, stability, security and tranquillity for everyone because we must create an environment for progress. We govern with the principles of democracy and the rule of law because humankind is safe only when everybody is accountable. And we pledge to continue living in peace with all of our neighbours because we value peace and harmony.

Malawi's commitment to international peace and security is on record. We have been sending peacekeeping forces to various parts of Africa and beyond for a long time. I am happy to report that Malawi's record in peacekeeping is illustrative and outstanding. In that regard, we are committed to the work of the United Nations. As a beacon of peace, we also actively pursue the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 project "Silencing the guns by 2020" — and silence the guns we must.

On the economic front, Malawi continues to register steady but considerable progress, despite the attendant challenges. The country registered a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 3.2 per cent in 2015, as compared with the global average of 3 per cent, and is expected to reach 5 per cent in 2016. Although inflation has been negatively affected by the food shortage, bulk maize importation should help to reduce inflation and consequently improve lending rates. Our domestic and foreign debts are within sustainable levels. And the economy is progressively generating much-needed jobs, particularly among our youth. Moving forward, the combination of robust fiscal and macroeconomic reform programmes that the country is implementing is projected to lead to further GDP growth, single-digit inflation and low lending rates, which will in turn lead to increased confidence, greater investment, more jobs and improved incomes.

Our only major setback in the last two years was the effects of climate change. In 2015, we experienced terrible floods that affected over half of the country. In 2016, we endured just the opposite, as yet again half of the country was affected, this time by a scorching drought. When we consider climate change, let us remember that there are real souls out there suffering the effects. We, as a country, will do our duty to humankind. This afternoon, I will sign the Paris Agreement on Climate Change here at Headquarters and commit my Government to the ratification and implementation of that crucial document. Malawi has already adopted a climate change policy, which will guide our domestic implementation of the Paris Agreement. We are taking action on climate change.

Let me also put on record that Malawi is making exemplary progress in the health sector. We are pioneering innovative approaches to the management of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We are among the few countries on the African continent that have successfully rolled out the test-and-treat programme. We are managing the pandemic. But we need concerted efforts to manage non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and cancer.

On gender equality, Malawi is taking proactive measures to reduce the vulnerability of women and adolescent girls to violence and abuse. Consequently, we are focusing on addressing gender-based violence and balancing reproductive and productive roles in order to enhance women's participation in decision-making. This work entails collaboration with traditional leaders, in order to tackle retrogressive traditional practices that harm our women and the girl child. We have also enhanced legal and policy reforms and improved our law enforcement mechanism in that area. We are adopting the Gender Equality Act: Implementation and Monitoring Plan 2016-2020 as well as improved gender-sensitive data-collection approaches.

On trade issues, investment and market access, Malawi continues to open up the economy and offer numerous investment opportunities. We have opened up to investors in the mining, manufacturing, agriculture and adding value, tourism, transport, water, energy and financial sectors. We are rapidly improving our business climate. We are ready to do business with the world. I therefore invite the global community to patronize the annual Malawi Investment Forum, to be held in Lilongwe on 10 and 11 October. It is imperative that regional and global markets be free of distortions such as subsidies, tariffs and non-tariff barriers. We must live up to the aspirations of the World Trade Organization Doha Development Agenda. The global community must realize that it is only by taking such steps that African countries will be able to produce and add value to their commodities. That will generate the necessary jobs to keep our young people in the continent and propel our economies to sustainable growth and prosperity.

Without investments in those areas, it will continue to be a challenge to prevent African youth from taking desperate and dangerous action by crossing the seas and oceans to reach developed economies. Such investments will also reduce the risk of our youth being lured into radicalism and extremism, with the attendant threat to domestic and international peace and security. I must underline that poverty in African communities is a danger to the global community because poverty and the disenchantment of our youth can be an easy source of radicalization.

Speaking in my capacity as United Nations Youth Champion, I am fully committed to the promotion of youth development and harnessing the demographic dividend in Malawi, across the African Continent and beyond. I am delighted to report that the African Union has adopted "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend" as its theme for 2017. I wish, therefore, to call upon global leaders to join the efforts of the African Union and our global partners in prioritizing investments in our youth, in order to accelerate socioeconomic transformation and development at the global level.

On United Nations reform, the common African position is the one espoused as the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. Our firm belief is that the attainment of the SDGs cannot happen in an environment that is devoid of representation, fairness, efficiency, transparency and accountability, such as at the Security Council. My country therefore earnestly supports all efforts and work currently under way to find a suitable vehicle for the reform and revitalization of the United Nations, and shall seek every possible way to contribute to the appropriate solution on the matter.

Let me conclude by reiterating that Malawi is making every effort to overcome the decades of underdevelopment, disease and hunger that have retarded the development of the country. That is our quest for the dignity of our people and their place in the world. Malawi is set to be a productive partner in our collective push to transform our world. We are the leaders of that transformation. We are the generation that must transform the world. History demands our collective leadership.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tabaré

Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vázquez (*spoke in Spanish*): As a citizen and the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, it is an honour for me to speak to the General Assembly again from this rostrum. In this forum, which is the largest and most representative of humankind today, I offer the greetings of the citizens and the Government of my country. Our greetings reflect the values of peace, freedom, democracy, justice and solidarity, which define our nation and the United Nations, which we helped found in 1945, and today we are a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

As this is not my first time here, I run the risk of repeating what I said on previous occasions, and in particular what I said on 29 September 2016 in the General Assembly at its seventieth session (see A/70/PV.16). But I am taking that risk because, with only a few exceptions, all the issues that I raised a year ago can be conveyed in the same terms and, in some cases, even graver ones.

Let us be clear: I do not say that as a reproach, and even less so as self-praise. It is painfully obvious, however, that despite the efforts of the United Nations to fight terrorism, violence, intolerance, discrimination, poverty, inequality, injustice and organized crime, these scourges continue to plague much of humankind. For it is our modest belief that the task of Governments and, moreover, of rulers — that is to say, our task, which has been entrusted to us by our citizens — cannot be limited to making assessments and telling people what is amiss. Our unconditional duty is to create the conditions for our people to build their own lives in society and to support them in that task. What I am saying does not seem like much, but it is a lot.

Without ignoring the enormous importance of other issues under consideration by the Assembly, let me refer to one that perhaps is not in the news, but it is certainly important because, as the data provided by the World Health Organization shows it is the primary cause of mortality throughout the world, especially in low- and middle- income countries. I am mainly talking about non-communicable diseases, in particular cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic pulmonary diseases. Clearly, the consequent terrible impact that these diseases have on humankind fly under the radar of our Governments, but they nevertheless tragically affect the lives of our peoples. And these avoidable diseases are largely due to four risk factors directly linked to supposedly typically modern behaviours, that is, smoking, alcohol consumption, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.

The primary effects of those risk factors are dramatically felt increasingly in middle- and low-income countries, and the poorest people in every country, strongly reflecting the underlying socioeconomic determiners. Among these populations, the conditions are ripe for creating a vicious cycle. Poverty exposes people to the behavioural risk factors that lead to non-communicable diseases and these, in turn, tend to worsen the state of poverty of the affected individuals and families. Health systems are also affected by the impact of the high costs of the treatments that are needed to treat chronic non-communicable diseases. To give an idea of the financial implications, and without being dramatic, I want to draw members' attention to the following statistics, which they certainly already know.

First, the direct cost of smoking on the national health-care systems of Latin America is estimated at $33 billion. That is the equivalent to 0.5 per cent of the gross domestic product of our region and 7 per cent of what it spends annually on health care. And the tax that our countries impose on tobacco products does not amount to 50 per cent of the costs of illnesses directly caused by smoking. Secondly, in 2009 the overall estimated economic cost of cancer in Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America amounted to an estimated $286 billion in direct costs — for example, doctors' visits and medical analyses — and indirect costs, including travel and lodging expenses and lost workdays and productivity, among others. Therefore, in our humble view, unless we vigorously fight the epidemic of non-communicable diseases in countries and social groups that are most exposed or affected, the impact of those diseases will grow. And the plausible global goal of reducing poverty, which is timely and adopted by the Assembly as the condition sine qua non for sustainable development, rather than drawing closer, dramatically, retreats more each day beyond our reach.

If we look at the statistics available, in a single working day approximately 104,109 people worldwide will die today as a result of the diseases I mentioned. How then can we not design and implement strategies to control alcohol and tobacco consumption and to promote healthful lifestyles, such as a healthful diet and physical exercise. No doubt what I am saying here is a

far cry from what those who preceded me in addressing the Assembly have said. While I hope I am mistaken, if we do not take appropriate measures, our countries, especially the poorest and most humble among them, will suffer dramatic consequences due to those diseases, which, I repeat, can be prevented. Of course, this is not a medical panel or a scientific symposium. But as a political leader who has not forgotten his medical profession and continues to be involved in it, allow me to tell the Assembly that not only is it possible to design and implement such strategies, but that very positive results can be achieved.

Those are not easy or simply strategies, but they are essential and can yield good results. Uruguayans know this from our own real-life experiences. But more than that, we have in place actual projects that we are working on. As on this issue there is also no future without solidarity, we call upon all countries, Governments and peoples, non-governmental organizations, as well as scientific, medical and international organizations, to form an alliance under the United Nations against the epidemic of non-communicable diseases — an alliance for a healthy life and as broad, vigorous and dynamic as possible. It is possible — not easy, but possible. In many ways, more than financial resources, it requires conviction and political will to go ahead.

Uruguay is a world leader in the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. But there have been opponents to that leadership. Among them, at the beginning of the year 2010, a claim was brought before the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes by the tobacco firm Philip Morris. That company was suing our country because of its opposition to two regulations adopted by our country in order to control tobacco. In addition to the formal arguments brought by that tobacco firm, the main reason for its action was to punish a small country like Uruguay that had decided to control tobacco consumption and to work hard for the health and right to live of our people. The lawsuit was a punishment, using our small country as an example, so that all countries that were implementing or planning to implement similar policies would learn from this lesson not to go forward with them.

The proceedings were lenghthy, meandering and costly. In the end, though, on 8 July, the arbitral tribunal of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes handed down its final ruling. It was decisively favourable to Uruguay. None of the claimants' arguments were accepted and, more important, the policies adopted by our country were recognized as sovereign, legitimate and in line with the international commitments Uruguay had undertaken and in accord with international law. But things do not happen by coincidence. In that regard, I would like to thank the World Health Organization, many of the countries represented here and all the institutions and individuals who in one way or another supported Uruguay's cause in this dispute. I thank all of them sincerely on behalf of the Uruguayan people. The best way to return such support — and without being ignorant of the circumstances under which we live today — we commit ourselves to continue working hard, as our modest means allow — to help all the people of the world succeed in meaningfully defending their rights to health and life.

Uruguay is not unaware of the circumstances in other regions of the world. Again, we are not indifferent. Allow me to address some of those issues.

First, we would like to congratulate the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. We reiterate to them our willingness and readiness to continue cooperating with the parties in the new and demanding stages of the peace process.

Secondly, in our address to the General Assembly in 2015 (see A/70/PV.16) we expressed our desire that the seventieth session would be the last at which our country had to call for an end to the economic, trade and financial embargo so unfairly imposed by the United States on Cuba. So long as the embargo remains in place, Uruguay will continue to demand here its definitive lifting.

Thirdly, we are not indifferent to the complex political and institutional situations that exist in several brother nations. As good brothers, we hope that such difficulties will sovereignly resolved on the basis of democratic institutional frameworks and in a calm, respectful and sincere dialogue among the parties involved. The will of citizens, the will of the people, must be thoroughly respected.

I very much appreciate the attention the Assembly has given to me today. On behalf of the Uruguayan people, a small country in South America's Southern Cone, I would like to reiterate that, within our modest means, we will continue to work with members to strive for a more fraternal world with more solidarity

for more social justice, with peace, with respect and with tolerance for all inhabitants of the planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Abdullah II: Allow me to express today my highest regard for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication and tireless efforts to advance the cause of peace and global harmony. I have deeply appreciated our work together over the past 10 years.

As I stand here today, elections to Jordan's national Parliament are coming to a conclusion. It is one more step on our country's positive evolutionary path — a path to which we have insistently conformed despite regional turbulence and a massive refugee burden. It represents an achievement that can be credited largely to our citizens, especially our youth, who have stubbornly held to Jordan's heritage of unity, strength and forward-looking spirit in spite of the odds. And it is those very odds that make the elections a true triumph of progress over regression.

As we gather here today, there are forces at play in my region and beyond whose sole purpose is to stack the odds against the core values that bind our common humanity. I am referring, of course, to the network of extremist terrorists who have dominated headlines of late. And they seek global dominance as well. They want to wipe out our achievements and those of our ancestors, to erase them and drag us back to the Dark Ages.

The question we must ask ourselves as we face the battle of our generation is what our legacy will be. Will we pass on to our children a world dominated by dread and division, where safety and security will be at the forefront of their minds as they board an airplane, attend a concert or football match, or stroll through a mall? Most important, are we doing what must be done to confront and decisively defeat this evil force, so that our children can live in a world where fear and suspicion are replaced by human comradery and hope, so they can reach their fullest potential and add to the stockpile of human achievement accrued over the ages?

As much as I wish it were otherwise, sadly the answer to those questions is no. How can we be effective in this fight when we have not clearly defined who the enemy is? Who are we fighting with, and who are we fighting against? And I am struck today, after several years of facing the global war on terror, by the lack of understanding of the true nature of Islam that I find among many Western officials, think tanks, media leaders and policymakers. I find myself stating the obvious again and again.

False perceptions of Islam and of Muslims serve to fuel the terrorists' agenda of a global struggle by polarizing and factionalizing societies East and West — each side stigmatizing the other and each side driven deeper into mistrust and intolerance. Muslims, a quarter of the world's population and citizens of every country, have a central role in the future of our planet. Muslim men and women bring the world a rich heritage of civic responsibility, justice, generosity, family life, and faith in God.

When some, out of prejudice or ignorance of what Islam is, seek to exclude Muslims from fulfilling their role, or on the other hand, when the outlaws of Islam, the khawarij, attempt to mislead some Muslims by deforming our religion through false teachings, our societies' future is put at risk. When the outlaws of Islams, the khawarij, murder, when they plunder, when they exploit children and reject the equality of women before God, they abuse Islam. When the khawarij persecute minorities, when they deny freedom of religion, they abuse Islam.

Islam teaches that all humanity is equal in dignity. There is no distinction among the various nations or

religions or races. The Quran forbids coercion in religion. Every citizen is guaranteed the State's protection for themselves, their families, their properties, their honour, their privacy, and their freedom of religion and thought. Muslims believe in the divine origins of the Bible and the Torah. God says in the Koran:

> "Say Ye: 'We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to the Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: and we submit to Allah.'" (*The Holy Koran, II:136*)

Indeed, the prophet mentioned most in the Koran is Moses, named 136 times. Jesus, whom we call "Christ Messiah," is named 25 times. His mother, Mary, called "best of all women in creation," is named 35 times, and there is a chapter in the Quran called Maryam. The khawarij deliberately hide these truths about Islam in order to drive Muslims and non-Muslims apart. We cannot allow that to happen. Once we understand that this is a battle that we must fight together — all religions and all of us who believe in the dignity, freedom, and well-being that is the birthright of every individual — then we can turn towards our common enemy and examine through a clear lens the unique nature of our foe.

Let me state clearly that those radical outlaw groups do not exist on the fringes of Islam. They are altogether outside of it. Thus, we refer to them as *khawarij:* outlaws of Islam. They declare the entire civilized world as the enemy and all people, military or civilian, as fair game. They aim to incubate satellite caliphates in every country of the world in order to extend their reach. They are also expanding fast and wide through their mastery and exploitation of modern technology, including social media. To confront this non-traditional enemy, we need non-traditional means, a new mindset, new partnerships and reformed methodologies. For Muslims, first and foremost this is a fight for our future. All elements of our community have a role to play, not only in mosques and religious centers, but media, schools, and communities. Let no one be misled: traditional Sunni Islam and all of its schools of jurisprudence decisively reject the ideas and claims of the takfiri jihadists. Muslims need to help identify and counter the outlaws of Islam who pick and choose and cut and paste religious texts in order to twist and distort true Islamic teaching.

The international community also faces a fight for the future. The war will not be fought on the battlefield alone. Our adversary has brought the fight to every place where humans live and interact: airports, cafes and city streets. Security cooperation is imperative, but equally important is a holistic approach. We need to open up new channels between continents and nations, within countries and among people. That means reforming the way we communicate, share information and use our technologies. The very same modern communication tools used against us must be employed by us, and we can do that while respecting the important issue of privacy. Creative innovators in the private sector, especially in the technology sector, are vital for our future and must be brought on board.

Ours is a global fight. The focus must not stop with the Middle East, but must reach far beyond into West and East Africa, South-East Asia and the Balkans. In Syria, a military approach will leave no winners, but only losers on every side and further civilian suffering. Ending violence ultimately demands a political process — one shepherded by a unified global vision and led by all of the Syrian people. In Iraq, international support remains critical as the Government and the people continue to uproot the khawarij. However, key to achieving and sustaining any success is an inclusive approach that engages all components of the country in the political process and in State institutions.

As we pursue those goals, the international community must also take responsibility for those whose lives have been crushed and who have been impoverished. I am referring to the millions of refugees and victims. We cannot decisively defeat the scourge of terror and violence without decisively rooting out the injustices that provide it with fertile ground. From the Abu Ghraib prison to the streets of Kabul and schools in Aleppo, injustice and humiliation have left tremendous human suffering in their wake.

No injustice has spread more bitter fruit than the denial of a Palestinian State. I believe that peace is a conscious decision. Israel has to embrace peace, or eventually be engulfed in a sea of hatred in a region of turmoil. Safeguarding Jerusalem is a key concern, as the Holy City is a strategic linchpin not only for my region but for the world.

That is a priority for me personally and for all Muslims. We utterly reject attacks on Muslim and Christian holy sites and any attempts to alter the historic

Muslim, Christian and Arab identity of the Holy City. As the Custodian of Islamic Holy Sites in Jerusalem, I will continue my efforts to protect those places and stand up against all violations of their sanctity, including attempts to establish temporal and spatial divisions restricting free use of the Al-Aqsa Mosque on Haram Al-Sharif.

Perhaps the central and most vital battleground for this defining war of our generation is the mind. The despicable, damaging ideology of hate, murder and self-destruction that is being spread in crash courses online and elsewhere must be confronted with a counter-narrative of hope, tolerance and peace. Together, in the General Assembly and in our regions, countries and communities across the world, we have the power to create that counter-narrative. Let us show that we also have the will to act.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the statement he has just made.

King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Johann Schneider-Ammann, President of the Swiss Confederation

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Johann Schneider-Ammann, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Johann Schneider-Ammann, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Schneider-Ammann (*spoke in French*): On 26 July in Abu Dhabi, the Swiss solar-powered plane, Solar Impulse, finished its world tour. On the same day that the whole world commended that technical feat, the International Organization for Migration issued a statement saying that, since the beginning of 2016, more than 3,000 migrants had lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea. That shows us that once again humankind is capable of the best and the worst: excellence in innovation at the service of the environment, but also powerlessness and a certain inertia in the face of immense tragedy, born of dictatorship, poverty and warfare.

The challenges facing the international community are extensive. The situation in the Middle East and in certain regions of Africa, as well as at the gates of Europe, represent a tragic example of that. The weakening of States, economies and societies fosters the radicalization that can lead to terrorism and armed conflict, which bring with them their corollary victims — refugees and displaced persons. The consequences affect us all. Additional threats remain, such as natural disasters, climate change and its impacts and, indeed, antimicrobial resistance. Economic crises and the vicious cycle of unemployment, vulnerability and social exclusion that accompanies them are of concern to decision-makers around the world.

In the face of the scale of those challenges, a strong United Nations is more necessary than ever. The Organization has already proved what it is capable of. Its tireless efforts to mobilize the international community within the framework of various action plans have prolonged the all-important liberalization of the global economy. Over the past 20 years, the United Nations has helped to reduce extreme poverty rates by half and increase average life expectancy. Thanks to United Nations incentives, education for the world's populations has improved. The involvement of the private sector and civil society in global governance is constantly growing.

There is another signal of hope, namely, the recent peace agreement in Colombia. Switzerland, the depositary of the agreement, commends all the parties involved for that breakthrough on the road to lasting peace. Our generation is the first since the beginning of the twentieth century not to have lived through a world war. The United Nations has greatly contributed to that outcome, even if we must admit that there are still too many regional conflicts and that those conflicts have resulted in too many victims.

Because of its universality, the United Nations has a unique legitimacy, which gives rise to a monumental responsibility, with the number of its initiatives, agreements and processes constantly multiplying. A new global vision is taking shape, and all States are involved. Among the cornerstones of that vision is the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is the common framework for the development of sustainable solutions. It provides the basis for a renewed social contract between leaders and populations.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which seeks to limit global warming, is a strong sign of the commitment of States. The recent decision of the United States and China to ratify the Agreement is a very important step towards ensuring its success. The first World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul, which helped to develop solutions aimed at helping people affected by crises and disasters, is further evidence of international solidarity. Furthermore, the review of the United Nations peace and security architecture, which we recently completed, highlighted the importance of conflict prevention.

Finally, this year we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights Council, which has substantially contributed to the promotion and defence of human rights. A further step is now needed to strengthen the influence of its actions on the ground. The "Appeal of 13 June", launched by Switzerland and supported today by 70 States, rightly proposes to improve conflict-prevention activities by more systematically integrating the human rights dimension, including strengthening the links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council.

In recent years, we have provided ourselves with valuable tools to build a better world; now it is time to use them. In that context, I would like to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who, during a decade of hard work, has enabled the United Nations to make significant advances. We are convinced that his successor will continue the work and reform of the United Nations.

Our approach in this crucial phase must be based on principles that are dear to us, the Swiss, namely, the principles of inclusion and participation. I am convinced that by acting together we will succeed in meeting all the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Switzerland was one of the first countries to introduce national measures aimed at implementing the 2030 Agenda. We are determined to follow through on that commitment.

I hold the deep conviction that, in order to achieve the goals that we have set, we must have a sound economy. Promoting sustainable economic growth means making commitments that favour societies that offer equitable opportunities for all their members. A thriving economy is a primary objective, because it is a essential tool for creating opportunities for all citizens. A thriving economy makes it easier for young people, women and older workers to enter the labour market. I see that as absolutely consistent with the commitments undertaken by the United Nations. For a dynamic economy that provides jobs and opportunities is an important factor in preventing terrorist abuses and armed conflict.

In Switzerland, we have identified three key elements that enable us to regularly be at the forefront of innovation and competitiveness.

First, we have an effective training system that reflects the needs of the real economy as well as those of basic research. University courses and vocational programmes in Switzerland benefit from the same attention and the same care. Enterprise learning enriched by theoretical training in vocational schools plays a central role in the system.

Secondly, our liberal labour laws allow companies to evolve with the markets, participate in and contribute to technological progress and easily adopt innovative methods and products. The flexibility of our economy becomes the best guarantee of employment.

Thirdly, we have in place an effective and respected social partnership that ensures industrial peace. Regular negotiations between representatives of employers and employees ensure that labour agreements are flexible and accepted by all, and meet the needs of industries and regions.

But those key elements cannot produce positive effects without international trade. Exchanges stimulate competition, scientific and technological progress and innovation. And we should never forget that freedom expressed through democracy and framed by the rule of law is the best guarantee in ensuring that a company may realize its full economic, scientific and cultural potential.

It is also important to meet the challenges of globalization in the digital domain, not only in terms of transparency, data security and equal opportunities, but also from the perspective of the opportunities of technological, social, political and economic progress. In an open and democratic society, it is certainly vital that people be able to use digital technologies in informed and safe ways. However, we must also do everything possible to ensure that the new possibilities

offered by digitization facilitate access to employment rather than make employment more precarious.

It is easy to forecast that digitization will make jobs disappear. But that is not what matters; the real challenge is to identify the new jobs that it will create. For it is only by making that effort that we can put in place the training that will allow the greatest number of people to find jobs in tomorrow's world. In order succeed in that effort, we need to engage in dialogue with the most innovative companies. The United Nations and its specialized agencies can help ensure that all countries can take advantage of the opportunities offered by technological progress.

Speaking of the challenges facing the United Nations and the international community leads us naturally to Geneva as an international city. Switzerland is committed to prioritizing that city as a centre of global governance. We are supporting the modernization of the city's real estate, but we are also strengthening synergies between the various stakeholders in international Geneva, whether in the field of global health or of humanitarian action. There have been a number of initiatives in Geneva in recent months, namely, the Appeal of 13 June to Put Human Rights at the Heart of Conflict Prevention, the launch of a High-level Panel on Water and Peace, the organization of a conference on the prevention of violent extremism, and also various kinds of peace talks and negotiations. They are all evidence of the importance of Geneva as an international city and of Switzerland's commitment. It is a place that is useful for the world, and we will continue to commit to ensuring that its role is strengthened.

I am wholeheartedly convinced that the only viable responses to the contemporary challenges that we face are to be found in collective and solidarity-based solutions. To find such solutions, the international community needs a strong United Nations that is also modern and effective. That is the path we must take. Together, we must now support the Organization with vision and determination.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Johann Schneider-Ammann, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard, President of the Republic of Peru

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru

Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kuczynski Godard (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to address the General Assembly, to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and to express Peru's willingness to contribute to the success of his stewardship.

Two months ago, when I began my term as President of the Republic of Peru, I expressed a commitment to the goals set forth by the founders of our Republic. In 2021, Peruvians will celebrate 200 years of our independent life, thereby consolidating a sound democracy, one that is socially functional and prosperous, with better opportunities for jobs and equality and where human rights are promoted. Our Government's plans and public policies coincide with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which are enshrined in the 2030 Agenda. They include access to water, education, health care for all Peruvians and other services that are vital in order to drastically reduce poverty, in the context of a full-scale battle against corruption, discrimination, insecurity and drug trafficking.

One key objective of my Government is to ensure the efficient management of safe water and sanitation for all. We will ensure access to drinking water and sewerage systems for all those families that do not now have such basic services, which accounts for about 10 million inhabitants, or almost a third of our people. We will make a significant investment that will prioritize the Amazon and Andean regions. We will work with non-traditional systems for potable water for non-urban areas, and we will implement systems for rainwater-harvesting in the Amazon and undertake public works through the reforestation programme known as "Blue Mountains", aimed at harvesting water

in the highlands of the Andean Mountains. I believe that interaction with the United Nations in that regard is a priority. I am therefore very honoured to have participated in the High-level Panel on Water just a few days ago.

Another very important issue for my Government is to promote green growth, while coordinating the use of land-based and marine ecosystems. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change should serve as an inspiration for us to implement those policies. Peru is a country that is particularly vulnerable, and we see that on a daily basis in the melting of our glaciers and in the extreme cold that occurs in southern Peru sometimes, both of which have compelled us to redirect our scarce resources to meet those challenges.

Peru is promoting such policies so as to become a member, as quickly as possible, of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. My Government's Administration has a clear vision of the new challenges and responsibilities that Peru must grapple with, which leads us to deepen our agreements with countries that have similar prospects, problems and challenges. They include our partners in the Pacific Alliance, namely, Colombia, Chile and Mexico. It would also include Brazil and Argentina, which are important neighbours, along with Ecuador. Together with them, we are tackling, in a harmonious and coordinated manner, the challenges of development in the twenty-first century.

Peru has a firm commitment to defending and definitively strengthening representative democracy, human rights and the rule of law. That commitment was clearly enshrined in the democratic Charter of the Organization of American States. In that context, fundamental freedoms, the right to participate freely in political life and the separation of, and respect for, the balance of powers are the cornerstones for the governability of our region and can ensure a future with hope.

We also respect the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, something that was established and introduced by the Latin American countries as a norm of international law a century ago. However, respect for that principle cannot, and should not, go against defence interests and the promotion of democracy and human rights, which consitute an irrevovable heritage for future generations.

In that context, it is imperative to mention our concern regarding the critical political, economic and social situation that our friends in Venezuela are currently experiencing. Full-fledged democracy requires absolute respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as due process. It also requires fully guaranteeing respect for the separation and balance of powers. The situation in Venezuela has been impacted by extreme violence, social and political confrontation and severe shortages of food and medicine. In order to address that multifaceted crisis, we call in solidarity for an internal political dialogue to begin as soon as possible, without conditions or restrictions and within a context of full respect for the Constitution. Peru is ready and willing to undertake all the necessary efforts that might assist our Venezuelan friends in bringing about a solution to their problems. We will work with the countries of the Pacific Alliance in that endeavour, especially with Venezuela's neighbouring country of Colombia, where we shall be in a few days to witness the signing of the peace agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia.

In conclusion, I would like to convey to the General Assembly that the Government that I lead in Peru is an advocate of modernization, compatible with the efforts promoted by the United Nations system, in a global, interdependent context, which has, however, unfortunately been affected by a series of grave conflicts that have been mentioned here today and throughout all of our debates.

Various parts of the world are experiencing a crisis of confidence, setbacks in globalization, populist and protectionist temptations and an almost unprecedented wave of refugees, as the King of Jordan mentioned a moment ago. Our aim in South America and Latin America is to create a bridge of stability and cooperation between the Pacific and the Atlantic that seeks to promote the gradual restoration of peace and prosperity in the western hemisphere.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General on his decade of service to the international community in such an important role.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Erdoğan (*spoke in Turkish, interpretation provided by the delegation*): I greet the General Assembly on behalf of myself, my country and my nation with the utmost respect. I hope the seventy-first session of the General Assembly will succeed in its purposes and will lead to favourable results for all countries and nations.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and I thank His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his work during his presidency during the previous session, while wishing him luck in his future endeavours.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his valuable contributions as he ends his 10-year tenure as Secretary-General, during which he served in a time of global challenges.

Within the first quarter of the twenty-first century, humankind has reached a peak in achievements in science, technology, economic development and health. However, such brilliance has also a very dark and disgraceful side. In Syria, in Iraq and in many countries suffering in the grip of terrorism and war, hundreds of thousands of women and children, the young and the elderly, are being killed. Refugees fleeing death, tyranny and oppression are, unfortunately, also facing degrading treatment in many European cities.

Terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front and the Democratic Union Party and Kurdish People's Protection Units, continue their attacks and actions in the region. There is also great potential for the disputes in the Caucasus region to unfold into a full-fledged conflict. Many problems, from Yemen to Ukraine, are of particular urgency, while peoples in countries throughout the world struggle with hunger, epidemics, poverty and illiteracy.

That is the disgraceful side of our world, damaging human dignity and disturbing the human conscience. What is even more distressing is that many of those crises and problems could easily be resolved. Peace, prosperity and security for future generations greatly depend on the steps and measures that we take today. Now is the moment to show leadership with a sense of responsibility in addressing the problems before us decisively.

Today, terrorist organizations are able to employ a variety of methods. On the night of 15 July, we in Turkey suffered a malicious coup attempt initiated by the Fethullah terrorist organization, also know as Fethull. That terrorist organization murdered 241 citizens and injured 2,194 people. Our Parliament building, the presidential complex and many security organizations and law-enforcement units were bombed by the terrorist organization, using F-16 fighter jets. Tanks rolled through the streets and over people. Helicopters and military vehicles opened fire on civilians. The coup attempt was successfully repelled by our nation, which heroically preserved its democracy, Government, freedoms and future and the constitutional order.

I therefore take pride in my nation's people, which defeated that heinous coup attempt at the risk of their lives. For a period of 29 days the people never abandoned the city squares of Turkey, remaining on call to protect our democracy. They threw their bodies in the way of tanks so as to repel the coup attempt. They took a very noble stand. If I am standing here before the Assembly today, it is because of our nation's brave and noble reaction. It should never be forgotten that the coup attempt in Turkey was aimed at democracy throughout the world as well. Our nation taught a historical lesson to those intending to carry out coup attempts and became a source of inspiration for all nations committed to protecting democracy.

The new generation of terrorist organizations poses a security threat, not only for Turkey but also for all 170 countries around the world in which such organizations exist. In other words, today the majority of the countries represented here in the General Assembly are currently under the threat of such clandestine structures. The terrorist organizations work on the premise of a deep-rooted psychological heresy aimed at subduing the whole world far beyond the borders of Turkey. The members are deviant in their actions. The basic

strategy of the terrorist organizations is to infiltrate State institutions, influencing society and dominating economic resources under the disguise of education, dialogue, tolerance, non-governmental organizations and the best of intentions.

From this rostrum, I would like to call on all our friends to take the necessary measures against the Fethullahist terrorist organization in their own countries in order to protect the future of their own people and their well-being. Based on our experience, it is evident that, if you do not fight against the Fethullahist terrorist organization now, tomorrow may be too late. I would also like to take this opportunity to say that attributions such as “Turkish” or “Turkey” and all other similar labels used by that terrorist organization and the persons associated with it have no relation with Turkey.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria has reached its sixth year. To date, 600,000 people have reportedly lost their lives, and, because of the war, 12 million people have had to leave their country, 5 million of whom have taken refuge in other countries. There are now 2.7 million such people in our country. They were forced to leave their homes behind and have been welcomed in Turkey. We have never asked why they ended up in Turkey. Our doors are wide open. We have not shut our doors in their faces, because they were fleeing barrel bombs and fighter jets. For those people, we have had to assume our responsibilities and do what was expected of us.

While the West and the rest of the world might not do so, we will continue to welcome them, because we are human beings. In the face of such an atrocity, we are obliged to keep our doors open to all those fleeing tyranny and oppression. We have opened our doors and kept them open. And we will continue to open our doors in the future. The international community has, unfortunately, remained indifferent to the suffering of people in conflict zones. The numbers that we have mentioned correspond to human beings.

The Syrian people are in a state of exhaustion in the grip of proxy wars that have been shaped by a cruel Administration, merciless terrorist organizations and global and regional competition. In that process, unfortunately, the international community has failed to live up to its humanitarian values and its collective conscience.

To date, Turkey has spent approximately $25 billion on the refugees, including money directed to non-governmental organizations and municipalities. Members might ask: what has Turkey received from the rest of the world? From the United Nations, we have received only $525 million in aid and nothing else. Have we received anything from the European Union (EU)? The EU made certain promises, which have, unfortunately, not been kept. It has allocated $178 million to UNICEF. That is all. Turkey itself has not directly received any aid whatsoever in financial terms.

Since the beginning of the conflict, we have claimed that the problem was a common question for the rest of the world. We have been establishing close contacts in solidarity with influential international figures. The Syrians are our neighbours and brothers and sisters. We could not remain silent in the face of such tragedy and carnage. We have never remained silent and never will. Currently, 2.7 million refugees are being housed in our country, along with 300,000 Iraqis. A total number of 3 million refugees have never been subjected to any ethnic or religious discrimination in Turkey. We have opened our arms wide.

In addition to the tent and container cities in which we accommodate the refugees in Turkey, we will continue to provide all forms of support commensurate with our capabilities. We expect the EU and all other organizations that have pledged financial support to rise to the occasion. We expect them to keep their promises. Similarly, we expect the United Nations to keep its promises. I hope and pray that the General Assembly at its seventy-first session will loudly convey that message to the rest of the world, because the contributions of the international community should not be limited $512 million s. What is one to think?

From this rostrum, I call upon the rest of the world, including my European friends who believe that the Syrian refugees represent a threat and clear danger to them. Barbed wire and high walls will never provide them with the safety, security or peace of mind that they are seeking. That effort is in vain. The problems of the Syrian refugees should be immediately solved once and for all. Otherwise, we will never be able to prevent the irregular migration, social issues and security risks embedded within that problem. We must not lose any more time in ending the conflict, the terrorism and the environment of persecution, which are the sources of the problem in Syria. We must urgently implement a political settlement process.

We attach great importance to protecting Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We have no claims whatsoever on Syrian territory. Syria belongs to the Syrian people. No one should ever have any plans whatsoever with regard to the territory of Syria.

Starting with our support for the Syrian opposition, what is known as Operation Euphrates Shield was launched, which is critical to re-establishing stability, peace and prosperity in a region of despair. It became clear that, with the launching of that operation, the priority of the terrorist organization Kurdish Workers Party, or of the Kurdish Democratic Party, is in not fighting against Da'esh. The operation — or offensive, as some prefer to call it — has also boosted the self-confidence of the moderate Syrian opposition forces. Furthermore, that development has provided encouragement to the local forces in Iraq that are eager to cleanse Mosul of the terror sowed by Da'esh.

As those who are present here are probably aware, for a long time I have appealed for the establishment of a safe zone along our border with Syria, which at more than 900 kilometres is the longest border with Syria. Along that border, Turkey has been continuously under threat. We have been extremely patient. However, on 24 August, in the city of Gaziantep, next to the Syrian border, a wedding party was attacked by a 14-year-old suicide bomber, a boy sent there by Da'esh terrorists. The blast killed 56 people and injured more than 100. We were patient until that critical moment. That was the precise time when we said, enough is enough.

Along with the moderate opposition, we initiated the offensive. Primarily in Jarabulus, we have eliminated Da'esh and extended operations all the way to Al-Rai, where Da'esh was repelled. The local inhabitants of Jarabulus were resettled, as were those from Al-Rai. From A'zaz to the Euphrates, the entire region was saved from becoming a belt of terrorism. Instead, it was converted into a belt of peace. The operation we are conducting today has the eventual goal of protecting that safe zone and ensuring that it is in fact safe.

The people of Jarabulus were saved from the grip of the terrorists and are confident in returning to their homes. The electrical and water infrastructure will be made operational immediately. The Turkish Red Crescent, Turkish humanitarian aid organizations and all of the other non-governmental organizations have mobilized to meet the needs of the local inhabitants. All of the civil facilities needed by the local inhabitants will be constructed in the near future. In order to make that possible, the areas officially designated as safe zones should also be declared as no-fly zones. We must maintain a firm stand so as to ensure that a no-fly zone will be established for the protection and security of the region's inhabitants.

It is unfortunate that the ceasefire, a process that has received enormous investment, has failed. As is clear, a ceasefire is no longer possible. Yesterday, a United Nations convoy was attacked by the regime's forces, resulting in the death of one person and many others injured.

The Syrian regime has not allowed aid deliveries supervised by the United Nations to reach the people of Aleppo, who are in dire need. They are also attacking United Nations convoys. The regime is condemning people to famine and suffering, in order to encourage them to surrender or to die. The United Nations and the Security Council should no longer tolerate the regime's policies.

In Iraq it is clear that it will not be easy to establish a political system to effectively protect its ethnic and sectarian diversity, which makes up the greatest underlying strength of the country. Within that context, the Mosul operation should be conducted by taking into consideration the sensitivities of the people of the region. Otherwise, a new humanitarian crisis will emerge, leading to the influx of yet another 1 million people seeking refuge in other countries. We cannot leave the Iraqi people alone at this critical juncture, when they need the support of the international community now more than ever.

Allowing the Palestinian people to live in an independent Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the two-State solution, is an obligation of the international community to Palestinian children, if nothing else. Israel, especially, should respect the sanctity of the Temple Mount and put an end to violations of its status.

We will try to benefit from our normalized relations with Israel to facilitate the peace process and resolve the economic and humanitarian challenges faced by our Palestinian brothers and sisters through every possible effort. In that vein, we will continue our efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip.

That brings me to a very important point. The World Humanitarian Summit was held in May, in Turkey, for

the first time in history. We consider that Summit to have provided an important opportunity to explore new ways of more effective crisis intervention around the world. In that connection, I would like to be clear in my remarks. With respect to providing support to the least developed countries around the world, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States rank among the top three donors. But in the ratio comparing the amount of humanitarian aid to gross domestic product, Turkey is ranked number one in the world.

We are the country housing the most significant number of refugees around the world, and we are doing everything within our ability to stop irregular migration. Upon Turkey's initiative, the subject of Syrian refugees was addressed by the General Assembly last year for the first time. Similarly, migration and terrorism were incorporated into the Group of 20 agenda, thanks to Turkey's efforts. We are cooperating with the European Union on the refugee crisis to the greatest extent possible.

Based on the goal of preventing deaths in the Aegean Sea, we have succeeded in reducing the irregular migration number to 50 people per day; whereas, in October 2015, that number had reached 7,000 per day. That shows that Turkey has successfully fulfilled its commitments under the framework of the refugee agreement with the EU. However, we regret that the promises made by the EU in the context of the agreement of 18 March have been forgotten, while ongoing false pretexts prevail and excuses are all that we hear.

The Security Council must be reformed to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. We fully appreciate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's progress in that respect. Furthermore, it is obvious that, unless the Security Council, as the main organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, is reformed, such efforts will be in vain and the task will remain unfulfilled.

That is why we say that the world is greater than the five permanent members. We have been reminding the international community of that fact over and over again with every chance we get. The Security Council was established in the aftermath of the Second World War. One cannot preserve the same structure of the Council under the circumstances of modern times. One cannot condemn the fate of the rest of the world to depend on what the five permanent members in the Security Council say. There are five permanent seat-holders and 10 non-permanent seat-holders in the Security Council. That is not a proper Security Council. A Council that does not represent the entire world can never serve to re-establish peace and justice around the world. That is something that we need to revisit over and over again. Can everyone think about that — three European countries, one country in Asia and one country, the United States of America, of course — five countries as the permanent seat-holders? What about the rest of the world? What about the other countries around the world? They have remained on the sidelines. We ignore them.

Instead, why not have 20 countries as permanent seat-holders in the Security Council, under a rotational system? In that system, each country would, deservedly, be represented on the Security Council every year or every two years. That is the only way to establish fairness and justice. The representative nature of the Security Council should be established so that the organ will be much more effective, more just.

In order for that to be possible, the General Assembly has to reach complete consensus. Please do not even consider remaining silent, or else we cannot achieve anything. We cannot succeed in our policies. We have to engage in spying, so to say. We have to be strong. We have to stand on our two feet, and talk about the truth and nothing but the truth. We have to stand behind the truth. We are the politicians. Only in that way can the world attain the level of justice that it yearns for. This is the only way to achieve democracy.

Islamophobia is an alternate name for racism and discrimination. We see it prevailing in countries with a large Muslim population. About a decade ago, along with the then Prime Minister of Spain, we co-chaired the initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations project that aimed to find permanent solutions to such dangerous movements that threaten our prosperity around the world. Similarly, we are also glad that interest in the Mediation for Peace Initiative that we pioneered along with Finland in 2010 under the auspices of the United Nations has increased.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we have jointly developed, includes ambitious and transformative goals for us all. Official development assistance makes up the most important resource for supporting development efforts, notably for the least developed countries (LDCs). Turkey's official

development assistance reached $3.9 billion in 2015. As I have previously mentioned, the 0.54 per cent of our gross domestic product, which is the ratio of humanitarian aid that we provide, is beyond the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average and helps us approach the United Nations target, which is 0.7 per cent. Turkey has surpassed its commitment to provide $200 million annually to LDCs in 2011, and has delivered more than $1.5 billion to LDCs in a mere five-year period.

Before concluding my remarks, I hope and pray that the seventy-first session of the General Assembly will be the beginning of a new age to alleviate the pain and suffering of people around the world, and that it will help us change our world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Turkey for the statement he has just made.

His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President took the Chair.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): This is a special moment for Fiji as you, Sir, assume the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session — the first Fijian and the first Pacific Islander to attain this high Office at the United Nations. Your nation is honoured and proud. On behalf of every Fijian, I offer you, Mr. President, my warmest congratulations and wish you every success as you guide our deliberations over the next 12 months.

I want to thank those nations that supported Fiji's bid for the presidency, including our neighbours and friends among the Pacific small island developing States. I also thank Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark for his leadership during the seventieth session.

Fiji fully supports the agenda that you, Sir, have outlined for the coming session, which seeks to persuade the world to begin implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals that the 193 Member States adopted last year. As you rightly stated, Sir, when you took your oath of office last week, the seventy-first session must, for integrity's sake, be the year that we witness the wheels turning. We have collectively pledged to mobilize the global community to end all forms of poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change. And we have pledged that, as we do so, we will leave no one behind, wherever they live on the planet. That is our promise to the 7.5 billion people across the world, whose interests we represent. It is a promise that must be kept — a "universal push to transform our world", as the theme of this session puts it.

A centrepiece of the seventy-first session and one of our most critical priorities is the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which is to be held in New York next June on the theme "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". Fiji is proud to be co-hosting that gathering with Sweden, and I ask everyone to give that initiative their full support. The world must act quickly and decisively to reverse the environmental degradation of our oceans and seas, and the reckless and irresponsible use of those precious resources.

For a small island developing State such as Fiji, that is as pressing as the need to address the challenges of climate change and deal with the extreme weather events and rising seas that pose such a threat to our way of life in the small island developing States and other vulnerable parts of the world. Many millions of people in maritime and coastal communities the world over are looking to us for decisive action to address the growing crisis of population, pollution, overfishing and the loss of marine habitats.We must not fail them.

Fiji also comes to the seventy-first session with a plea to all nations that have yet to do so to ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We are proud to have been the first nation in the world to ratify the Agreement and launch the ratification instruments. But we also come with the message that Paris must be merely the first step. We are alarmed by scientific

predictions that the 2°C cap on global warming over pre-industrial levels agreed to in Paris is not enough to save us.

Seven months ago, the Fijian people were given a terrifying glimpse into the future that the experts say awaits us when we were struck by the biggest tropical cyclone ever to make landfall in the southern hemisphere, Cyclone Winston. Packing winds of more than 300 kilometres an hour, it killed 44 of our people and left many thousands homeless. Mercifully, it spared our main tourism areas — our principal source of income — so our wider community and our wider economy remained intact. But if this is what awaits us as global warming triggers weather events that are more frequent and more extreme, then God help us.

In common with other small island developing States, we face a nightmare scenario in which a single event scoring a direct hit could wipe out our economy, set us back for decades and make it impossible for us to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Our message from the Pacific therefore is this: the 2°C cap is not enough. We need the world to go one better and embrace the 1.5°C cap that we, members of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, called for in the Suva Declaration on Sustainable Human Development in the Pacific.

We also need deeper cuts in carbon emissions and more decisive global action than what we are currently witnessing. But as a first step, I appeal to all Member States to ratify the Paris Agreement and to turn away from what I have termed "the coalition of the selfish" — those countries that would see vulnerable nations battered and submerged rather than alter their pampered, carbon-driven lifestyles.

I am proud to report that Fiji is heeding the President's call to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. First and foremost, we have placed sustainable development at the core of our national agenda. The Green Growth Framework for Fiji, which I launched in 2015, is a blueprint for the future direction of our nation. It has been incorporated into our new five-year and 20-year national development plans that we will be unveiling in the coming months. These plans stipulate that no development whatsoever in Fiji will be permitted unless it can be conclusively demonstrated to be sustainable. We regard the preservation of our natural environment on land and at sea as our number-one priority. We are willing to make sacrifices to fulfil our solemn duty to the Fijian people to preserve their surroundings.

Article 40, paragraph 1, of our Constitution gives every Fijian the right to

> "a clean and healthy environment, which includes the right to have the natural world protected for the benefit of present and future generations".

I make a solemn pledge to my own people and to the wider global community that, while my Government remains in office, Fiji will never be among the ranks of those nations that have compromised their futures for short-term financial gain. We intend to raise our living standards by other means, especially by making things that other people want to buy and by providing services they want to access. We are taking the Fijian-made brand of quality products and services to the four corners of the Earth and managing our economy responsibly in accordance with international best practices, with a particular emphasis on infrastructure development, service delivery and providing for the less fortunate.

Of prime importance is our education revolution, by which we are equipping Fijian young people with the knowledge and skills to have satisfying, sustainable livelihoods and contribute to our nation's progress. We are providing free schooling for the first time and have established our first tertiary loan scheme and more scholarships for gifted students in order to open up a gateway of unprecedented opportunity to our universities and a new network of technical colleges. We have set our sights higher than ever before to become a smarter, more dynamic country at the hub of the Pacific, the crossroads of our region, and to evolve into a modern nation State that is a beacon to our neighbours and respected around the world.

I am pleased to report that we have made a strong start as a nation on the long but determined journey to achieve that goal. Not only are our people being given more opportunity than at any time in our history, not only are we creating a more equitable society, which includes targeted assistance for the vulnerable and the country's first pension scheme, but Fiji is also currently experiencing a record period of economic growth, with seven straight years of expansion.

Even in the wake of Cyclone Winston, we expect to see growth of nearly 3 per cent this year. Our message to the world is simple: Fiji is open for business. Fiji

has attractive incentives for investment and some of the most favourable corporate and personal tax rates in the Pacific region. We have state-of-the-art communications and an educated, English-speaking work force. We are investing in new roads, airports and other infrastructure and have dramatically improved the efficiency of our ports. We also have our pristine environment, spectacular islands, coastlines and waters. In addition, our standard of hospitality has made the Fijian people famous the world over.

We market ourselves to the world as a holiday destination with the slogan “Fiji — where happiness finds you”. Whatever the challenges of Cyclone Winston, I can confidently say that the Fijian people have never been happier. The joy that erupted when our world-champion rugby sevens team won the gold medal at the Rio Olympics was shared by every Fijian. It has brought us together in celebration and seen us more unified in recent weeks than at any other time in our history. It has also inspired us to imagine what else our small nation can do if we put our minds to it.

As many in the Assembly are aware, we have had considerable challenges through the years in forging a common identity and producing an equal and just society for every citizen, but I am here to say that those days are over. As Fiji approaches its first half-century as an independent nation in 2020, we are finally one nation, one people, with a great sense of national optimism and a great deal to look forward to.

To reflect our new-found confidence, we are also in the process of re-evaluating our relationships with the rest of the world. Last week, I assumed the position of Foreign Minister as well as Prime Minister, and I intend to steadily reform this Ministry and to refine certain aspects of our foreign policy to give it a new direction and a renewed sense of purpose.

First and foremost, we are going to place trade at the centre of our foreign-policy effort, with the promotion of the impressive collection of quality products and services under the Fijian-made brand. Some of these products and services are already making a global impact, but we believe we can do a lot more — whether it is our water, our cosmetics, foodstuffs and other manufactured goods, the more efficient marketing of Fiji as a prime holiday destination, or by spreading the wings of our boutique national airline, Fiji Airways, flying to other destinations in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

We intend to immediately boost the level of collaboration between our Foreign Ministry and our Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, which have too often operated in isolation. Our diplomats and trade commissioners will be instructed to make it a priority to work more closely with Fijian exporters to promote the Fijian-made brand, as well as to access goods and services of international standards from new and old trading partners that benefit Fijian consumers.

More broadly, we are rethinking some of our foreign policy positions and objectives. This includes a re-evaluation of the central principle of Fijian foreign policy for some years of being “friends to all and enemies to none”.

Of course, we seek friendly relations with all nations and are certainly not in the business of making enemies. But we intend, in future, to choose our friends in a more discerning manner and to align ourselves more closely with those countries that share our underlying values and principles. These include, above all, adherence to international law and adherence to human rights and human dignity, along with other shared values such as mutual respect, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the resolving of disputes by peaceful means and non-interference in one another’s internal affairs.

This change of direction will not be sudden. It is certainly not going to produce a dramatic change in the international company that Fiji keeps. But we are definitely seeking closer relations with nations that share our values and basic outlook, especially those nations that respect human life and the rights and dignity of their citizens, adhere to the principle of social justice, uphold the rule of law and insist on equality and respect for all human beings, as we in Fiji do.

As part of our wider commitment to human rights, we are seeking membership in the Human Rights Council for the two-year term that commences in 2018. We would be the first Pacific nation to serve on the Council, and I ask all member States to support our bid.

Fiji will continue to play a disproportionate role in the international community in relation to its size, whether it be our continuing commitment to United Nations peacekeeping and sending our men and women in uniform to protect ordinary people in troubled parts of the world, or our lead role in drawing global attention to the urgent need for action on climate change.

It is certainly a proud moment for me, as the leader of our small nation, to stand here before the nations of the world with you, Sir, behind me, as President of the General Assembly. Congratulations again on your appointment. I thank you for bringing such honour to our nation. Every Fijian — indeed, the entire community of nations — wishes you well as you preside over the deliberations of this seventy-first session and the great issues of our time on which the future of the world depends.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. May (United Kingdom): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly for the first time and to do so as Prime Minister of a country that has always been a proud and proactive member at the very heart of the United Nations.

The United Nations was formed because leaders across the world knew that they could deliver security for their citizens at home only if they could cooperate as a community of nations to deliver security across the globe. Some of the threats that we face together today are familiar to those founding leaders: war, political instability, abuses of human rights and poverty. Others are new: global terrorism, climate change and unprecedented mass movements of people.

We gather here today because we know that such challenges do not respect the borders of our individual nations and that only by working together shall we overcome them. As a new Prime Minister to the United Kingdom, my pledge to the United Nations is simple. The United Kingdom will be a confident, strong and dependable partner internationally, true to the universal values that we share together. We will continue to honour our commitment to spend 0.7 of our gross national income on development, building on the achievements that we have already made to reduce poverty, deal with instability and increase prosperity the world over, and we will drive forward the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We will continue to champion the rights of women and girls, making sure that all girls get the education they deserve and tackling horrific abuses such as female genital mutilation and the use of sexual violence in conflict. We will continue to be a steadfast permanent member of the Security Council, meeting our NATO commitment to spend 2 per cent of gross domestic product on defence and making a leading contribution to United Nations peacekeeping efforts, where we have doubled our commitment, including new deployments to Somalia and South Sudan.

We will continue to stand up for the rules-based international system and for international law, and I join other leaders in condemning the outrageous bombing of the aid convoy in Syria yesterday. We will continue to play our part in the international effort against climate change, and, in a demonstration of our commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the United Kingdom will start its domestic procedures to enable ratification of the Paris Agreement and complete these before the end of the year. And we will continue to strengthen our existing partnerships, from the United Nations to the Commonwealth and to NATO, seeking to resolve conflict in countries across the world, from Colombia and Cyprus to Somalia and Yemen.

But we must never forget that we stand here at the United Nations as servants of the men and women that we represent back at home. As we do so, we must recognize that for too many of these men and women, the increasing pace of globalization has left them feeling left behind. The challenge for those of us in this Hall is to ensure that our Governments and our global institutions such as the United Nations remain responsive to the people we serve, and that we are capable of adapting our institutions to the demands of the twenty-first century and of ensuring that they do not become irrelevant.

So when it comes the big security and human rights challenges of our time, we need this, our United

Nations, to forge a bold new multilateralism, because, as we have seen even in the past week, no country is untouched by the threat of global terrorism, and when extremists anywhere in the world can transmit their poisonous ideologies directly into the bedrooms of people vulnerable to radicalization, we need not just work together to prevent conflict and instability in nation States, but to act globally to disrupt the networks that terrorist groups use to finance operations and recruit to their ranks.

When we see the mass displacement of people on a scale unprecedented in recent history, we must ensure that we are implementing the policies that are fit for the challenges we face today. And when criminal gangs do not respect our national borders, trafficking our fellow citizens into lives of slavery and servitude, we cannot let those borders act as a barrier to bringing such criminals to justice.

In each of these areas, it is the convening power of our United Nations that gives us a unique opportunity to respond. But we can do so only if we modernize and adapt to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

As a United Nations we have shown how we can work together to reduce the threat of international terrorism by preventing conflict and instability from developing. For example, as a permanent member of the Security Council, Britain has played a leading role in the fight against Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Since 2010, with huge support from across the region and, critically, the commitment of Somalis themselves, Al-Shabaab has been driven from all the major cities it used to control.

It is vital that as an international community we continue to support countries in the region that are contributing thousands of troops, and that we continue to build the capacity of Somali security forces. That is why the United Kingdom is now going to increase further our security support, and we will be calling on others to do the same, hosting an international conference on Somalia in 2017, to maintain this vital momentum. Missions like this must remain central to the work of the United Nations, but on their own they are not enough, because the terrorist threats we face today do not come from one country but rather exist in a different space. The global networks they exploit require a different kind of global response.

These organizations are using our own modern banking networks against us. We therefore need to look at our regulations and information-sharing and use our technological capabilities to get ahead of them. They are targeting our airlines, exploiting the fact that no one country can keep its citizens safe when they are flying between multiple jurisdictions. That is why this week the United Nations will vote on a United Kingdom-led draft resolution on aviation security so that every country implements the standards we need to ensure that no country is the weak link.

They are exploiting the Internet and social media to spread an ideology that is recruiting people to their cause all over the world. We therefore need to tackle this ideology head-on. That is why the United Kingdom has championed the work that the Secretary-General has led to develop a strategy for preventing violent extremism. Now, as an international community, we must work together to adopt and implement the most comprehensive national action plans to tackle both the causes and the symptoms of all extremism. It is not enough merely to focus on violent extremism. We need to address the whole spectrum of extremism — violent extremism and non-violent extremism, Islamist and neo-Nazi, hate and fear in all their forms.

Just as we need the United Nations to modernize to meet the challenges of terrorism in the twenty-first century, so too must we adapt if we are to fashion a truly global response to the mass movements of people across the world and its implications for security and human rights. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol must remain the bedrock of our response, but the context in which they must be applied has dramatically changed.

Across the world today, there are 65 million people who have been forcibly displaced. That is the equivalent of the entire population of the United Kingdom. It is an unprecedented figure, one that has almost doubled in a decade. And yet United Nations appeals are underfunded, host countries are not getting enough support and refugees are not getting the aid, education and economic opportunities they need. We must do more. As the second-largest bilateral provider of assistance, the United Kingdom remains fully committed to playing a leading role.

In the past five years, the United Kingdom has invested over $9 billion in humanitarian assistance, saving millions of lives every year. The London Conference on Syria in February raised $12 billion in pledges, the largest amount ever raised in one day in response to a humanitarian crisis. And that money

is being used to combine both urgent humanitarian assistance and vital economic development, benefiting both refugees and the communities and countries hosting them. Clearly, we need to continue our efforts to bring an end to the conflict and the appalling slaughter in Syria and to get aid through to those who need it.

While these efforts continue inside Syria, we also need new efforts to support refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries, including through education and opportunities to work. These efforts are complemented by loans from international financial institutions and access to European markets. Through our trading relationships and direct engagement with businesses, we are mobilizing the private sector to create new jobs in the region for everyone. While there is more to be done, it is this approach to financing both humanitarian support and economic development that I will be championing when I announce a further United Kingdom financial contribution at President Obama's leaders' summit on the global refugee crisis later today.

But in addition to refugees and displaced people fleeing conflict and persecution, we are also seeing an unprecedented movement of people in search of greater economic opportunities through the same unmanaged channels. That affects all of us, and it is the responsibility of us all to take action. We cannot ignore the challenge or allow it to continue unmanaged. We need to do better — for the countries people leave, for the countries they move through, for the countries they try to get to — and most of all, better for the migrants and refugees themselves.

Despite the huge increase in international efforts, more migrants have died attempting hazardous journeys across borders this year than any other. I believe we have to use the opportunity afforded by this session of the General Assembly for an honest global debate to address this global challenge.

In doing so, we should be clear that there is nothing wrong with the desire to migrate for a better life and that controlled, legal, safe, economic migration brings benefits to our economies. But countries have to be able to exercise control over their borders. The failure to do so erodes public confidence, fuels international crime, damages economies and reduces the resources for those who genuinely need protection and whose rights under the Refugee Convention should always be fulfilled. I believe there are three fundamental principles that we now need to establish at the heart of a new approach to managing migration that is in the interests of all those involved.

First of all, we must help ensure that refugees claim asylum in the first safe country they reach. The current trend of onward movements, where refugees reach a safe country but then press on with their journey, can only benefit criminal gangs and expose refugees to grave danger. We must therefore all do more to support countries where the refugees first arrive, to provide the necessary protection and assistance for refugees safely and swiftly and to help countries adapt to the huge economic impact that refugees can have — including on their existing population.

As we are seeing in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, when the right assistance is provided, solutions that provide sanctuary and opportunity to refugees, and opportunities for those hosting them, can be found. This is also good for the refugees and the countries they come from — because the closer they stay to home, the easier it will be for them to return and rebuild after the conflict.

Secondly, we need to improve the ways we distinguish between refugees fleeing persecution and economic migrants. I believe we must ensure that the existing Convention and Protocol are properly applied to provide protection to refugees and reduce the incentives for economic migrants to use illegal routes. This in turn will help us target support for those refugees who need it most and retain the support of our populations for doing so.

Thirdly, we need a better overall approach to managing economic migration — one that recognizes that all countries have the right to control their borders — and that we must all commit to accepting the return of our own nationals when they have no right to remain elsewhere. By ensuring a managed and controlled international migration response while simultaneously investing to tackle the underlying drivers of displacement and migration at source, we can reject isolationism and xenophobia, thereby achieving better outcomes for all of our citizens, particularly for the most vulnerable.

Finally, as we gather here today to bring the founding values of the United Nations to bear on some of the most pressing global problems, the likes of which we have never seen before, we must also face up to the fact that some of the worst human rights abuses, which we thought we had consigned to the history

books, have re-emerged in new, pernicious forms. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the General Assembly, stated that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, that no one should be held in slavery and servitude and that slavery and the slave trade should be prohibited in all their forms. Yet, nearly 70 years on, we are presented with a new form of slavery — modern slavery. Organized crime groups, which are largely behind this modern slavery, lure, dupe and force innocent men, women and children into extreme forms of exploitation. Trafficked and sold across borders, victims are forced into living the kind of inhumane existence that is almost too much for our imagination.

Such criminals have global networks to help them make money out of some of the world's most vulnerable people. Victims are held captive in squalid conditions, under the constant shadow of violence and forced into sex and labour exploitation. If we are going to succeed in stamping out this abhorrent crime and bring the perpetrators to justice, we need to confront the reality of what were are dealing with. These organized-crime groups work across borders and jurisdictions. They often use the Internet and modern technology to recruit, transport, control and exploit their victims, all the while staying ahead of legal systems that are often constrained by traditional geographical boundaries.

We must therefore take action. We must use our international law-enforcement networks to track down these criminals wherever they are in the world and put them behind bars, where they belong. We need to be smarter and even more coordinated than the criminal gangs in our efforts to stop them. In the United Kingdom, I am setting up the first-ever Government task force for modern slavery, bringing together every relevant department to coordinate and drive all our efforts in the battle against this cruel exploitation. We are also using our aid budget to create a dedicated fund focused on high-risk countries where we know victims are regularly trafficked to the United Kingdom. Yesterday, I committed the first £5 million from that fund to work in Nigeria, to reduce the vulnerability of potential victims and step up the fight against those who seek to profit from this crime.

But if we are to meet the Sustainable Development Goal to eradicate modern slavery, we need to go much further. Security relationships have developed between many countries for dealing with such issues as counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, drug trafficking and wider intelligence-sharing, but we do not have a similar relationship for the fight against modern slavery. We therefore need our law-enforcement agencies to work together, with joint investigation teams working across multiple countries. Victims will find freedom only if we cultivate a radically new, global and coordinated approach to defeating this vile crime. Together, we must work tirelessly to preserve the freedoms and values that have defined our United Nations from its inception. Together, we must work tirelessly to restore these freedoms and values to the lives of the men, women and children who are exploited for profit and held captive with little or no chance of escape.

From the Declaration of St. James's Palace and the Atlantic Charter forged by Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt to the first meeting of the General Assembly in London in 1946, the United Kingdom has always been an outward-looking, global partner at the heart of international efforts to secure peace and prosperity for all our peoples. And that is how we will remain. For when the British people voted to leave the European Union, they did not vote to turn inwards or walk away from any of our partners in the world. Faced with challenges like migration, a desire for greater control of their country and a mounting sense that globalization is leaving working people behind, they demanded a politics that is more in touch with their concerns and bold action to address them.

But that action must be more global, not less, because the biggest threats to our prosperity and security do not recognize or respect international borders. And if we focus only on what we do at home, the job is barely half done. This is not the time to turn away from our United Nations. It is the time to turn towards it. Only we, as members of this community of nations, can act to ensure that this great institution becomes as relevant for our future as it has been in our past.

Let us therefore come together, true to our founding values but responsive to the challenges of today, and let us work together to build a safer, more prosperous and more humane world for generations to come.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Trudeau (Canada): It is an honour to be present at the General Assembly today. It is wonderful to be here in the great city of New York. Once again this week, New Yorkers showed us how to be resilient and resolute in the face of violent extremism. On behalf of everyone in this Hall, let me directly say to the people of New York that they are a model to the rest of the world, and we thank them.

Exactly one year ago, Canada was in the middle of a long — 78 days on the road, and I can assure the Assembly that, in Canada, there are 78 days' worth of roads — and closely fought election campaign. It is the responsibility of a leader to spend time with the people they are elected to serve. To get the real stories, it is important to go where people live: coffee shops and church basements, mosques and synagogues, farmers' markets and public parks. It was in those places that I got the best sense of what Canadians were thinking and how they were doing and, through the politeness — because we Canadians are always polite even when we are complaining — I learned a few things.

I talked with people my age who were trying to be hopeful about their future but found it tough to make ends meet, even when they were working full-time. I heard from young Canadians who were frustrated, who told me that they could not get a job because they do not have work experience but they cannot get work experience because they do not have a job. I heard from women and girls who still face inequality in the workplace and violence just because they are women, even in a progressive country like Canada.

(*spoke in French*)

I met parents who were working hard to give their children every opportunity to succeed but who feared that their efforts would not be sufficient. I had the chance share a meal with elderly retirees who had toiled all their lives but who now have to go to food banks. Over the past few years, I have had far too many disturbing conversations with Canadians, but they made something clear to me. Canadians still believe in progress, or, at least, that progress is possible. But that optimism is mixed with great concern. It is clear that Canadians are not the only ones who feel that way; those feelings are present everywhere. That anxiety is a fact of life.

(*spoke in English*)

When leaders are faced with citizens' anxiety, we have a choice to make. Do we exploit that anxiety or do we allay it? Exploiting it is easy, but in order to allay it we need to be prepared to answer some very direct questions. What will create the good, well-paying jobs that people want and need and deserve? What will strengthen and grow the middle class and help those working hard to join it? What will build an economy that works for everyone? What will help to make the world a safer, more peaceful place?

To allay people's anxiety, we need to create economic growth that is broadly shared, because a fair and successful world is a peaceful one. We need to focus on what brings us together, not on what divides us. For Canada, that means re-engaging in global affairs through institutions like the United Nations. It does not serve our interests — or the world's — to pretend that we are not deeply affected by what happens beyond our borders.

(*spoke in French*)

Earlier this year, we helped negotiate the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. As part of our commitment to implementing that Agreement, we announced that Canada would invest $2.65 billion over five years to fund clean, low-carbon growth in developing countries. In order to help promote peace and security in areas affected by instability, we reaffirmed our support for NATO and committed ourselves to expanding Canada's role in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We hosted the fifth Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, where we increased our contribution by 20 per cent by giving more than $800 million to the Global Fund. We also encouraged our partners to increase their contributions, making it possible to raise $13 billion in support of ending AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria by 2030.

(*spoke in English*)

We have done all this — and will do much more — because we believe we should confront anxiety with a clear plan to deal with its root causes. We believe we should bring people together around shared purposes such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. What is the alternative? Is it to exploit anxiety? Is it to turn it into fear and blame? Is it to reject others because they look or speak or pray differently than we do?

In Canada we got a very important thing right — not perfect, but right. In Canada, we see diversity as a source of strength, not weakness. Our country is strong not in spite of our differences, but because of them. We must make no mistake: we have had many failures, from the internment of Ukrainian, Japanese and Italian Canadians during the World Wars, to our turning away of boats of Jewish and Punjabi refugees, to the shamefully continuing marginalization of indigenous peoples. What matters is that we learn from our mistakes and recommit ourselves to doing better. To that end, in recent months, Canadians have opened their hearts and their arms to families fleeing the ongoing conflict in Syria, and from the moment they arrived, those 31,000 refugees were welcomed — not as burdens, but as neighbours and friends — as new Canadians.

(*spoke in French*)

That effort has brought Canadians together. In an almost unprecedented fashion, the Government has worked with the business community, engaged citizens and civil society to help the newcomers adapt to their new country. But our efforts will not truly be successful until those refugees have become established, full-fledged members of the Canadian middle class. I want the General Assembly to know that this objective is within our grasp — not because of what we have done, but because of what they are themselves.

(*spoke in English*)

Refugees are people with the same hopes and dreams as our own citizens. But while our people have felt anxiety, Syrians faced catastrophe. We all know where Syria's middle class is: they are living in refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. They are moving across Europe, looking for a place to set down roots, to get their kids back into school, to find steady work and to become productive citizens. Refugee camps are teeming with Syria's middle class: doctors and lawyers, teachers and entrepreneurs. They are well educated. They work hard. They care about their families. They want a better life — a safer and more secure future for their kids — as we all do. When I say, therefore, that I hope that the Syrian refugees we welcomed will soon be able to join our middle class, I am confident that we can make that happen, and we will do it by offering to them the same things we offer to all our citizens — a real and fair chance at success for everyone.

(*spoke in French*)

We are going to do all we can to build a strong middle class in Canada. We are going to invest in education, because it gives the next generation the tools they need to contribute to the world economy and to succeed. We are going to invest in infrastructure because it creates good, well-paying jobs for the middle class and helps to make our communities better places to live, work and invest. We are determined to build an economy that works for everyone — not just the wealthiest 1 per cent — so that every person benefits from economic growth. And we are going to refuse to give in to the pressure of trading our cherished values for easy votes. The world expects better from us, and we expect better from ourselves.

(*spoke in English*)

In the end, there is a choice to be made. Strong, diverse, resilient countries like Canada did not happen by accident, and they will not continue without effort. Every single day, we need to choose hope over fear and diversity over division. Fear has never created a single job or fed a single family, and those who exploit it will never solve the problems that have created such anxiety. Our citizens, the nearly 7.5 billion people we collectively serve, are better than the cynics and pessimists think they are. People want their problems solved, not exploited.

Canada is a modest country. We know we cannot solve these problems alone. We know we need to do this all together. We know it will be hard work. But we are Canadian, and we are here to help.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Canada for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.

Annex 107

Note Verbale from the Ministry of People's Power for External Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, No. 02013 (8 Nov. 2016)

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs

DM No. 02013

The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela presents its compliments to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and hereby rejects the information published in Navigation Notice No.12 of 29 June 2016, in which notice is given that the company Esso Exploration & Production Guyana (EEPGL) will expand a drilling programme planned to take place over a six-month period in the area referred to as the Stabroek Block by the Government of Guyana.

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela rejects *erga omnes* and in the strong possible terms the unilateral work done without consultations which the drilling activities that the company Esso Exploration & Production Guyana (EEPGL) is proposing to carry out with the approval of the Government of Guyana within the so called Stabroek Block would constitute. On this question, and as the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guyana well knows, a significant portion of the so-called Stabroek Block is located within the maritime frontage of the territory of the Essequibo, a zone that is claimed by Venezuela. Moreover, another sector of the aforementioned "Stabroek Block" is located on the continental shelf of the Orinoco Delta, an area over which Venezuela exercises full sovereignty.

The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela again wishes to express its concern at the violation of the provisions of the 1966 Geneva Agreement that such acts will represent. In this regard, the Government of the sister Cooperative Republic of Guyana is urged to show full respect for public international law and for the provisions of the applicable bilateral Agreement, article 5, paragraph 2 of which states that: "(2) No acts or activities taking place while this Agreement is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty ...."

In this regard, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to reiterate the principle that governs its foreign policy, which is peace through diplomacy, rejecting any action that could undermine bilateral dialogue between countries and become an obstacle to finding a practical, peaceful and satisfactory solution to the territorial controversy. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela therefore appeals to its sister Cooperative Republic of Guyana to abide fully by the international legal rules by which we are bound and avoid any type of action that creates unnecessary tensions between our two countries.

The Ministry of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela avails itself of this opportunity to reiterate its concern to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA
MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA
RELACIONES EXTERIORES

DM N° 02013

El Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, saluda al Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, en la oportunidad de rechazar la información publicada por medio del aviso a los Navegantes N°12, de fecha 29 de junio de 2016, en donde se señala que la empresa *Esso Exploration & Production Guyana* (EEPGL) ampliará un programa de perforación previsto para un periodo de seis (6) meses dentro del denominado por el Gobierno de Guyana "Bloque Stabroek".

El Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, debe expresar su más enérgico rechazo – de efecto *erga omnes* – por los trabajos inconsultos y unilaterales que comportarían el programa de perforación que pretende llevar a cabo la empresa *Esso Exploration & Production Guyana* (EEPGL), con el aval del gobierno de Guyana, dentro del llamado "Bloque Stabroek". Sobre el particular, y como es del conocimiento del Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de Guyana, parte importante del "denominado Bloque Stabroek", se encuentra ubicado en la fachada marítima del Esequibo, zona objeto de reclamación por parte de Venezuela. Además, otro sector del mencionado Bloque se ubicaría sobre la plataforma continental del Delta del Orinoco, área donde Venezuela ejerce su plena soberanía.

El Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, expresa nuevamente su preocupación, en vista de que tales acciones violentarían lo pautado en el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966. Al respecto se insta, nuevamente, al Gobierno de la hermana República Cooperativa de Guyana, a mantenerse apegado al Derecho Internacional Público, y bajo el cumplimento de lo establecido en dicho Acuerdo bilateral, en su Artículo 5, párrafo 2, el cual expresa que: *"...2) Ningún acto o actividad que se lleve a cabo mientras se halle en vigencia este Acuerdo constituirá fundamento para hacer valer, apoyar o negar una reclamación de soberanía territorial..."*.

En este sentido, la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, reitera el principio que rige su política exterior, la Diplomacia de Paz, rechazando cualquier acción que perjudique el diálogo constructivo bilateral entre naciones, e impida encontrar una solución, práctica, pacífica y satisfactoria de la controversia territorial. En este sentido, la República Bolivariana de Venezuela exhorta al Gobierno de la hermana República Cooperativa de Guyana, a mantenerse apegado a las reglas jurídicas internacionales que nos convocan, evitando así la puesta en marcha de acciones que crean tensiones innecesarias entre ambas naciones.

El Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, hace propicia la ocasión para reiterar su preocupación al Honorable Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana.

Caracas, 08 de noviembre de 2016

Al Honorable
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
República Cooperativa de Guyana
Georgetown.-

Annex 108

Note Verbale from the Ministry of People's Power for External Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, No. 02014 (8 Nov. 2016)

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs

DM No. 02014

The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela presents its compliments to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and wishes to refer to the content of its Note No. 096/2016, dated 21 July 2016, in which mention is made of the announcement by the Government of Venezuela of a mineral resources mapping project to prepare a new atlas of Venezuela.

On this question, and after consulting with the Simon Bolivar Geographic Institute of Venezuela (IGVSB), the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to inform the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana that the aforementioned project by the Institute is for the updating of a map and will be undertaken in the territory and other geographic spaces of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to state that the techniques used by the Simon Bolivar Geographic Institute of Venezuela (IGVSB) for updating the map do not violate public international law or the provisions of the 1966 Geneva Agreement.

In this connection, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to reiterate its commitment to peace through diplomacy, and therefore rejects any action that could undermine bilateral dialogue between countries and constitute an obstacle to a practical, peaceful and satisfactory solution to the territorial controversy. For these reasons and in conformity with public international law, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to reiterate that the territorial controversy between Venezuela and Guyana is governed by the 1966 Geneva Agreement and is subject to the peaceful settlement of disputes to which the aforementioned bilateral international instrument refers.

The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela avails itself of this opportunity to reiterate its concern to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Caracas, 8 November 2016

Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Cooperative Republic of Guyan

Georgetown

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA
MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA
RELACIONES EXTERIORES

DM N° 02014

El Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, saluda al Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, en la oportunidad de en la oportunidad de hacer referencia al contenido de su Nota N°096/2016, de fecha 21 de julio de 2016, en donde se menciona el anuncio del Gobierno de Venezuela sobre un proyecto de cartografía de recursos minerales para elaborar un nuevo Atlas de Venezuela.

Sobre el particular, y luego de haber realizado consultas con el Instituto Geográfico Venezolano Simón Bolívar (IGVSB), el Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, informa al Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, que el mencionado proyecto corresponde a una actualización cartográfica realizada por dicho Instituto, la cual se desarrollará en el territorio y demás espacios geográficos de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela.

El Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, debe expresar que las técnicas utilizadas para la actualización cartográfica del Instituto Geográfico Venezolano Simón Bolívar (IGVSB), no violentan el Derecho Internacional Público, ni los términos establecidos en el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966.

En ese sentido, la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, reitera su compromiso con la Diplomacia de Paz, con lo cual rechaza cualquier acción que perjudique el diálogo bilateral entre naciones, e impida encontrar una solución, práctica, pacífica y satisfactoria de la controversia territorial. Por tal razón, en concordancia con el Derecho Internacional Público, se ratifica que la controversia territorial entre Venezuela y Guyana se encuentra regida por el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, y está sujeta a la solución pacífica de conflictos a que se alude en el referido instrumento bilateral internacional..

El Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela hace propicia la ocasión para reiterar su preocupación al Honorable Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana.

Caracas, 08 de noviembre de 2016

Al Honorable
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
República Cooperativa de Guyana
Georgetown.-

Annex 109

Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (9 Nov. 2016)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
254 South Road & Shiv Chanderpaul Dr.,
Georgetown, Guyana
Telephone: 592-226-9080 Fax: 592-223-5241
Email: minister@minfor.gov.gy
Website: www.minfor.gov.gy

November 9, 2016

His Excellency Ban Ki Moon
Secretary General of the United Nations
Office of the Secretary General
United Nations Headquarters
New York

Dear Secretary-General,

I have the honour herewith to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 31 October 2016, informing us that you are no longer able to appoint a Personal Representative for continuation of the good offices process, and that you will now proceed to take stock of the progress achieved in the resolution of the controversy with a view to making a decision on how to proceed before the end of your mandate.

With a view to assisting that stocktaking exercise, Guyana wishes to share some brief observations regarding the current situation.

Twelve months ago in "The Way Forward" you expressed your intention that if no solution could be found through the good offices process by the stocktaking in November 2016, the controversy regarding the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award would be submitted to the International Court of Justice for a final and binding decision. This two-stage procedure was a compromise solution. It followed extensive consultations at the highest levels between the Parties and your Chef de Cabinet at that time, Ms. Susana Malcorra, including a significant number of meetings. Notwithstanding its serious reservations, Guyana made every effort to give the good offices process a final opportunity.

Guyana takes note of your recognition that it is no longer possible to continue the good offices process. Guyana considers that further progress can only be obtained by referring the matter to a "means of settlement" that can result in a final and binding decision. At this stage, five decades since the Geneva Agreement was adopted, recourse to the Court offers the only solution that is compatible with Article IV of the Geneva Agreement.

Secretary-General, following your meeting in Quito with Venezuelan President Nicholás Maduro on 17 October 2016, a Venezuelan Communiqué asserted that the Geneva Agreement "exclude[s] a settlement in a legal forum". This assertion is not consistent with the express powers conferred upon you in Article IV to choose any of the means of settlement under Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, including judicial settlement. We note that President Maduro's statement contradicts Venezuela's own admission in the First Interim Report of the Mixed Commission, established pursuant to Article I of the Geneva Agreement as the initial means of settlement. The Report, signed in Caracas by the Venezuelan Commissioners Luis Loreto and G Garcia Bustillos on 30 December 1966, indicated Venezuela's position that *"the juridical examination of the question [*i.e. the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award*] would if necessary, be proceeded with, in time, by some international tribunal in accordance with article IV of the Geneva Agreement."* Having recognised the suitability of judicial settlement then, it is difficult to see how Venezuela might now be in a position to preclude the exercise by you of a power both parties granted to you, namely to refer the matter to the Court as the means of settlement. To the extent that there is a dispute concerning jurisdiction or the interpretation of the Geneva Agreement, it will be for the Court itself to determine the matter.

Secretary-General, the need for a final and binding decision on the controversy grows more important each day. For over five decades there has been no progress, and we now find ourselves in a situation of significant and alarming deterioration. On 4 October 2016 for instance, in a statement on the 117th anniversary of the 1899 Arbitral Award, Venezuela reportedly expressed its "deepest outrage", and accused Guyana of being motivated by "dark transnational interests and imperial favour for corporate centres".

Guyana was even accused of "aggression" acting together with "imperial forces". For a small nation such as ours, such assertions are a cause for serious concern. In view of the multiple reports of incursions by the Venezuelan military on Guyana's territory in recent months, the need for an immediate move to settle this controversy is more pressing than ever.

Without a clear signal that a final and binding decision will soon resolve this controversy, there is a serious risk of destabilization in the region. In the view of Guyana, inaction now can only serve to exacerbate the difficulties. A referral to the Court would have the effect of calming the situation, causing both parties to exercise restraint in their words and actions: such a consequence has been the experience where other controversial matters have been put before the Court. In fact, the primary judicial organ of the UN was intended exactly for such circumstances.

Guyana trusts that bringing this unjust and volatile situation to an end, and ensuring that a final solution is reached, would be a part of your enduring legacy as you enter the final days of your tenure.

We are grateful for the cooperation of your Chef de Cabinet in keeping us informed of progress in this matter. We appreciate that you see a need to consult on your decision with your successor, as on other matters, and we support that approach. In that context, and having regard to the calls made on him by President Maduro and Foreign Minister Rodriguez, I am endeavouring to do likewise shortly. It would be an honour to meet with you when I come, to offer a personal expression of my appreciation for all your efforts.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Carl B. Greenidge
Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Annex 110

Ministry of the People's Power for External Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, *Communiqué* (12 Nov. 2016)

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Ministry of the People's Power for External Relations

Communiqué

The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, on behalf of the Government and people of Venezuela, commemorated the 54th anniversary of the masterly show by Foreign Minister Marcos Falcon Briceño at the United Nations General Assembly in defence of the rights of Venezuela over the Guayana Essequibo.

On November 12, 1962 Foreign Minister Marcos Falcon Briceño presented to the international community the historical and legal arguments which showed that the Guayana Essequibo had always been, is and will be Venezuela's. Marcos Falcon Briceño left Venezuela with an important testimony for its diplomatic history and for the defence of our legitimate rights over the Essequibo territory.

Foreign Minister Marcos Falcon Briceño declared before the United Nations Organisation the non-conformity of Venezuela with the 1899 Arbitral Award. A ruling by which Imperialist Britain distorted, through blackmail and usurpation, the rules of law previously established by the 1897 Treaty of Arbitration.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela claims, as it has always done, its legitimate and legal rights over the territory of the Guayana Essequibo. Also, Venezuela reiterates the national position of Foreign Minister Marcos Falcon Briceño to search for a friendly, practical and satisfactory solution to the territorial controversy with the sister Cooperative Republic of Guyana, as envisaged in the 1966 Geneva Agreement, the existing legal instrument deposited legally in the United Nations Organisation, and which governs this territorial controversy as the law between the Parties.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela affirms that it is the wish of the Venezuelan people that the conversations with the fraternal people of Guyana take place in the most fervent atmosphere of friendship and harmony. We will move forward along the paths of peace and Latin American integration as was the dream of the Liberator Simon Bolivar and our Eternal Commandante Hugo Chavez.

Caracas, November 12, 2016

FTU: 2/7/2

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA
MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES

COMUNICADO

El Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, en nombre del Gobierno y el Pueblo venezolano, conmemora el 54 aniversario de la magistral exposición del Canciller Marcos Falcón Briceño ante la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas en defensa de los derechos de Venezuela sobre la Guayana Esequiba.

El 12 de noviembre de 1962 el Canciller Marcos Falcón Briceño presentó ante la comunidad internacional los argumentos históricos y jurídicos que demuestran que la Guayana Esequiba siempre ha sido, es y será de Venezuela. Marcos Falcón Briceño, le dejó a Venezuela un importante testimonio para su historia diplomática y para la defensa de nuestros legítimos derechos sobre el territorio Esequibo.

El Canciller Marcos Falcón Briceño manifestó ante la Organización de las Naciones Unidas la inconformidad de Venezuela por el Laudo Arbitral de 1899. Sentencia en donde el Imperio Británico violentó, a través del chantaje y la usurpación, las normas de derecho previamente establecidas en el Tratado de Arbitraje de 1897.

La República Bolivariana de Venezuela reivindica, como siempre lo ha hecho, sus legítimos y legales derechos sobre el territorio de la Guayana Esequiba. Asimismo, Venezuela reitera la posición nacional del Canciller Marcos Falcón Briceño de encontrar una solución amistosa, práctica y satisfactoria de la controversia territorial con la hermana República Cooperativa de Guyana, tal como está contemplado en el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1.966, instrumento jurídico vigente depositado legalmente en la Organización de las Naciones Unidas, y que rige esta controversia territorial como Ley entre Las Partes.

La República Bolivariana de Venezuela afirma que es un deseo del pueblo venezolano que las conversaciones con el fraterno pueblo de Guyana tengan el más ferviente ambiente de amistad y armonía. Avancemos por las sendas de la paz y la integración latinoamericana, tal como lo soñaron el Libertador Simón Bolívar y nuestro comandante eterno Hugo Chávez.

Caracas, 12 de noviembre de 2016

Annex 111

U.N. Secretary-General, *Note to Correspondents: The Controversy between Guyana and Venezuela* (16 Dec. 2016)

United Nations
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

New York

16 December 2016

Note to Correspondents: The Controversy between Guyana and Venezuela [scroll down for Spanish version]

Fifty years ago, shortly before Guyana's independence in 1966, the Geneva Agreement was signed with the aim of amicably resolving the controversy that had arisen as the result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the frontier between Venezuela and what is now Guyana is null and void. The 1966 Geneva Agreement confers on the Secretary-General of the United Nations the power to choose means of settlement of the controversy from among those that are contemplated in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter.

Within the framework of the Geneva Agreement, a Good Offices Process under the Secretary-General has been in place for the last 25 years in order to find a solution to the controversy. This process has so far involved three Personal Representatives of the Secretary-General (PRSG). In spite of these efforts, it has not been possible to bridge the differences between the parties.

The Secretary-General has engaged in intensive efforts to find a way forward that would be most conducive to finding a solution. To that end, the Secretary-General held a trilateral meeting with President David Granger of Guyana and President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela in the margins of the 70th General Assembly. The Secretary-General has subsequently dispatched several high-level missions to both capitals and held meetings at the highest level with both parties. In November of this year, he conducted an extensive stocktaking of the Good Offices Process.

On the basis of that stocktaking, the Secretary-General has reached the conclusion that the Good Offices Process will continue for one final year, with a new PRSG with a strengthened mandate of mediation, who will be appointed by the Secretary-General-designate shortly after he takes office. If, by the end of 2017, the Secretary-General concludes that significant progress has not been made toward arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy, he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement, unless both parties jointly request that he refrain from doing so.

The Secretary-General has discussed these conclusions with the Secretary-General-designate, who has expressed his concurrence with them.

The Secretary-General and the Secretary-General-designate applaud Guyana and Venezuela for addressing the controversy through peaceful means. The Secretary-General and the Secretary-General-designate are committed to see the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela resolved.

*****

Nota a Corresponsales sobre la Controversia Fronteriza entre Guyana y Venezuela

Hace cincuenta años, poco antes de la Independencia de Guyana en 1966, se firmó el Acuerdo de Ginebra con el objetivo de resolver amistosamente la controversia que surgió como resultado de la contención de Venezuela que el Laudo Arbitral del 1899 sobre la frontera entre Venezuela y lo que hoy es Guyana era nulo y sin efecto. El Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966 otorgó al Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas el poder de elegir entre los medios de solución pacífica contemplados en el Artículo 33 de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas.

En el marco del Acuerdo de Ginebra, durante los últimos 25 años se ha llevado a cabo un Proceso de Buenos Oficios bajo el Secretario General para encontrar una solución a la controversia. Hasta la fecha, este proceso ha contado con la participación de tres Representantes Personales del Secretario General. A pesar de estos esfuerzos, no ha sido posible superar las diferencias sustantivas entre las partes.

El Secretario General se ha esforzado por encontrar un camino a seguir que sea el más propicio para encontrar una solución. Con este fin, el Secretario General celebró una reunión trilateral con el Presidente David Granger de Guyana y el Presidente Nicolás Maduro de Venezuela al margen de la 70ª Asamblea General. Desde entonces, el Secretario General ha enviado varias misiones de alto nivel a ambas capitales y ha celebrado reuniones al más alto nivel con ambas partes. En noviembre de este año, realizó un extenso balance del Proceso de Buenos Oficios.

Basado en este balance, el Secretario General ha concluido que el Proceso de Buenos Oficios continuará por un último año, con un o una Representante Personal del Secretario General con un mandato reforzado de mediación, nombrado o nombrada por el Secretario General designado poco después de que él asuma funciones. Si, a finales de 2017 el Secretario General concluyera que no se ha logrado un avance significativo hacia un acuerdo completo para la solución de la controversia, elegirá la Corte Internacional de Justicia como el siguiente medio de solución, al menos de que ambas partes conjuntamente le pidan que no lo haga.

El Secretario General ha discutido estas conclusiones con el Secretario General designado, quien ha expresado su concurrencia con éstas.

El Secretario General y el Secretario General designado felicitan a Guyana y a Venezuela por dirimir la controversia a través de medios pacíficos. El Secretario General y el Secretario General designado manifiestan su compromiso con encontrar una solución mutuamente aceptable a la controversia entre Guyana y Venezuela.

Annex 112

Ministry of the People's Power for External Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, *Press Release: Venezuela celebrates UN decision to continue Good Offices to resolve dispute with Guyana over the Essequibo* (16 Dec. 2016)

Venezuela responses to SG letter December 2016 (unofficial translations):

16 December 2016, MFA tweets:

1. It is a victory for the Bolivarian diplomacy of peace conducted by President Maduro who firmly maintained the position of Venezuela over Good Offices

2. Venezuela reaffirmed its commitment to a negotiated solution to this dispute, y demands Guyana act in good faith in the Good Offices

3. The Geneva Agreement, that settles this dispute, promotes a practical and friendly solution satisfactory to both sides through a process of negotiation

4. In the next hours we will confirm to the UNSG the repeated position of Venezuela rejecting recourse to the International Court

5. Venezuela celebrates and thanks the announcement made by the UNSG, Ban Ki-moon, over the continuation of the Good Offices process over the Essequibo dispute.

Caracas, 16 December 2016 (MFA). Press Release.

This Friday, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela celebrated the conclusions of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, over the continuation of the Good Offices process over the Essequibo dispute.

This is how the Minister of Popular Power for External Relations, Delcy Rodriguez, explained it, adding through her account on Twitter, that 'in the next hours we will confirm to the UNSG the repeated position of Venezuela rejecting recourse to the International Court'.

The Chancellor emphasised that Venezuela reaffirmed its commitment to a negotiated resolution of this dispute, and demanded that Guyana comply with the Good Offices process in good faith, which the UNSG has decided will continue for one final year, until the end of 2017, with a reinforced mandate of mediation.

"It is a victory for the Bolivarian diplomacy of peace conducted by President Maduro who firmly maintained the position of Venezuela over Good Offices" added the Venezuelan Head of External Affairs.

In this context, she stressed that the Geneva Agreement, which grants to the Secretary Generla of the United Nations the power to choose the means of pacific settlement of disputes within Article 33 of the United Nations Charter, promotes a practical and friendly resolution acceptable to both parties through a process of negotiation.

This Friday, Ban Ki-moon informed the presidents of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro and of Guyana, David Granger, his conclusions over what the next most appropriate steps should be to resolve the dispute between the two countries over their borders.

He recalled that under the Geneva Agreement, over the last 25 years there has been a Good Offices Process under the Secretary General to find a resolution to the dispute. To this date, the process has involved the participation of three Personal Representatives of the Secretary General. In spite of these efforts, it has not been possible to overcome the substantive differences between the parties.

As such, Ban Ki-moon concluded that the current Good Offices Process, which has been running since 1990, will continue in 2017.

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17 December 2016, MFA tweet: ["This is how the British Empire usurped the Essequibo. Our peaceful claim is 200 years old!"



Por tanto, Ban Ki-Moon concluyó que el presente Proceso de Buenos Oficios, que ha sido llevado a cabo desde 1990, continuará en 2017. **LO**

Delcy Rodríguez @DrodriguezVen · 16 Dec 2016
Es victoria dla Diplomacia Bolivariana d Paz conducida x Pdte @NicolasMaduro q mantuvo firme la posición d Venezuela sobre Buenos Oficios
93 735 261

Delcy Rodríguez @DrodriguezVen · 16 Dec 2016
Venezuela ratifica su compromiso con la solución negociada de esta controversia,y exige a Guyana cumplimiento de buena fe en Buenos Oficios
23 572 149

Delcy Rodríguez @DrodriguezVen · 16 Dec 2016
Acuerdo de Ginebra,q dirime esta controversia,promueve la solución práctica, amistosa y satisfactoria para ambas partes mediante negociación
14 463 120

Delcy Rodríguez @DrodriguezVen · 16 Dec 2016
En las próximas horas haremos llegar al Secretario ONU la posición reiterada de Venezuela de rechazar el recurso a la Corte Internacional
17 478 132

Delcy Rodríguez @DrodriguezVen · 16 Dec 2016
Venezuela celebra y agradece anuncio realizado hoy x Sec. Gral ONU, Ban Ki-moon,sobre prosecución de Buenos Oficios en controversia Esequibo
42 742 247

[Venezuela celebra decisión de la ONU de continuar Buenos Oficios para dirimir controversia con Guyana sobre el Esequibo]

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Caracas, 16 de diciembre de 2016 (**MPPRE**).- La República Bolivariana de Venezuela celebró este viernes las conclusiones del secretario general de la Organización de Naciones Unidas (ONU), Ban Ki-moon, sobre prosecución de Buenos Oficios en controversia por el Esequibo.

Así lo dio a conocer la ministra del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores, Delcy Rodríguez, quien agregó, mediante su cuenta en Twitter, que "en las próximas horas haremos llegar al Secretario de la ONU la posición reiterada de Venezuela de rechazar el recurso a la Corte Internacional".

La Canciller destacó que Venezuela ratifica su compromiso con la solución negociada de esta controversia, y exige a Guyana el cumplimiento de buena fe en Buenos Oficios que, por decisión del Secretariado General de las Naciones Unidas, continuará por un último año, hasta el fin de 2017, con un mandato reforzado de mediación.

"Es victoria de la Diplomacia Bolivariana de Paz conducida por el presidente Nicolás Maduro que mantuvo firme la posición de Venezuela sobre Buenos Oficios", agregó la Titular de Exteriores venezolana.

En este contexto, enfatizó que el Acuerdo de Ginebra; que otorga al Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas el poder de elegir entre los medios de solución pacífica contemplados en el Artículo 33 de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas; promueve la solución práctica, amistosa y satisfactoria para ambas partes mediante negociación.

Ban Ki-moon, informó este viernes a los presidentes de Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro y de Guyana, David Granger, sus conclusiones sobre cuáles son los pasos a seguir más apropiados para la solución de la controversia entre los dos países sobre sus fronteras.

Recordó que en el ámbito del Acuerdo de Ginebra, durante los últimos 25 años se ha llevado a cabo un Proceso de Buenos Oficios bajo el Secretario General para encontrar una solución a la controversia. Hasta la fecha, este proceso ha contado con la participación de tres Representantes Personales del Secretario General. A pesar de estos esfuerzos, no ha sido posible superar las diferencias sustantivas entre las partes.

Annex 113

Government of Guyana, *Statement on the Decision by the United Nations Secretary-General* (16 Dec. 2016)

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
Co-operative Republic of Guyana

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Statement by the Government of Guyana on the Decision by the United Nations Secretary General

We are pleased to be able to convey to the people of Guyana that a new point of promise in our relations with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been reached.

It has long been the accepted position of all Governments in Guyana that the best means of settlement of our controversy with Venezuela should be a reference of it to the International Court of Justice. We consider that controversy to be essentially a legal question and one eminently susceptible to a legal process of settlement.

There can be no higher tribunal for this purpose than the International Court of Justice (on which once sat our own distinguished son Mohammed Shahabuddeen) to determine this matter on a definite basis. The Secretary General of the United Nations acting under the 1966 Geneva Agreement has informed the President of his decision to give the 'good offices' process one last period of twelve months, that is to the end of 2017.

If, at the end of that period, the Secretary-General concludes that significant progress has not been made towards arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy, he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement, unless the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela jointly request that he refrain from doing so.

The Government of Guyana accepts the decision of the Secretary General. We stand committed to using our best endeavours to fulfill its highest expectations. The Government will be writing formally to him as well as to the President of Venezuela to indicate our acceptance of this decision.

We believe that, in taking this decision, the Secretary General has remained loyal to the sacred mission of the United Nations to uphold the law and maintain the peace between nations – small and large. Guyana will do everything in its power to ensure that his expectations, and those of his successor to whom the mandate of implementation now falls – as well as our expectations are fulfilled. The Government calls upon all Guyanese to support the process that now lies ahead in the confidence that it will lead to a just and binding resolution of the discords that have plagued our development for so long. It is a fitting advance in this fiftieth year of our independence.

May God continue to bless our nation in this noble cause.

Annex 114

“One hand can’t clap’ to resolve border controversy – Greenidge”, *i News Guyana* (20 Dec. 2016)

‘One hand can’t clap’ to resolve border controversy – Greenidge

December 20, 2016

Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Greenidge said that Government had lost faith in the ‘good office’ process, essentially because of Venezuela’s non-cooperation with it, but that Government is now willing to give it one last try with the United Nation’s Secretary General’s (SG’s) nominee.

Minister Greenidge was this morning addressing the National Assembly in light of the decision communicated to the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela by the outgoing, SG, Ban Ki-moon on Friday, December 16, 2016, on the way forward on the border controversy.



Foreign Affairs Minister reports to the House on the latest update from the United Nations Secretary on the Guyana – Venezuela border controversy

In the communiqué, the SG had stated that the way forward on the border controversy between Guyana and Venezuela is for the 'good office' to occupy the forthcoming 12- month period. Further, if by the end of 2017, no significant process is made towards arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy, he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement, unless the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela jointly request that he refrain from doing so.

The SG also informed the Governments that the new SG, Antonio Gutterres who succeeds him, would be naming a Personal Representative, who will lead the parties in the 12 months of 'good office.' Guyana has since assured the SG of the country's acceptance of his decision, and the Government's commitment to every effort to making it a success.

But, addressing the House, this morning, Minister Greenidge warned that the 'good office' process can only produce mutually satisfactory results if Venezuela cooperates fully to that end.

"As we say in Guyana "one hand can't clap. Guyana will cooperate in resolving the controversy that has arisen as a result of Venezuela's contention that the 1899 Arbitral Award is null and void…we hope Venezuela will do likewise. If they do not, we will have readied ourselves for the International Court of Justice," Minister Greenidge said.

In conveying his decision to Guyana and Venezuela, the SG had also promised 'Good Offices' with a 'strengthened mandate of mediation.'

Minister Greenidge said the SG's communiqué was "a most significant moment in our relations with Venezuela." He noted that, "it promises one way or another," the resolution of the country's controversy with Venezuela.

The Minister expressed hope that the announcement brings satisfaction to all parties in the House, in light of the fact that "it has been the objective of all Governments of Guyana, since the early days of the Mixed Commission to resolve this matter with finality through a judicial process, particularly given our disappointment with the process through dialogue."

Annex 115

Letter from the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (21 Dec. 2016)

MINISTRY OF THE PRESIDENCY
Vlissengen Road,
Bourda, Georgetown,
Guyana

2016.12.21

His Excellency Nicolás Maduro Moros
President
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
Miraflores Palace
Caracas
Venezuela.

Dear Mr. President,

It is my sincere pleasure to extend my greetings and those of the people of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to you and to the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at this important juncture in the relations between our two nations.

I write to inform you of our full acceptance of the 15 December 2016 decision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the 'Way Forward', pursuant to the authority conferred upon him by the signatories under Article IV (2) of the 1966 *Geneva Agreement*. This *Agreement* requires him to choose the means of settlement of the controversy that has arisen as a result of Venezuela's contention that the 1899 Arbitral Award about the land frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is "null and void".

Guyana assures you of its commitment to fulfilling the highest expectations of the 'Good Office' process in the coming twelve-month period in accordance with the decision of the Secretary General, to conclude a full settlement of the controversy and, should it become necessary, to thereafter resolve it by recourse to the International Court of Justice.

Guyana considers the 'Way Forward' a unique opportunity to finally resolve the controversy and usher in a new and promising chapter in our bilateral relations. Accordingly, I have conveyed to the Secretary-General, Guyana's determination to do all in its power to ensure that the means of settlement that he has chosen will lead to a successful outcome.

I have assured the Secretary General, further, with regard to his urgings for possible confidence-building measures to create a positive environment for bilateral dialogue,

that Guyana accepts both the spirit and the letter of his proposal and will explore every avenue to reach agreement on them.

Guyana stands ready to cooperate with the Government of Venezuela on these matters and we have so assured the Secretary-General.

I have thanked the Secretary-General and his devoted staff, finally for their steadfastness to the sacred mission of the United Nations of upholding international law and maintaining peace and justice between nations large and small.

The Venezuelan people are our brothers and sisters. It will be our earnest endeavour to resolve all the issues that have stood between us in furtherance of fraternal relations and mutual prosperity in the years ahead.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

David Granger
President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Annex 116

Letter from the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (22 Dec. 2016)

23

MINISTRY OF THE PRESIDENCY
Vlissengen Road,
Bourda, Georgetown,
Guyana

2016-12-22

His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Office of the Secretary General
United Nations Headquarters
United States of America

Dear Secretary General,

I write without delay to acknowledge your letter of 15 December 2016, conveying your decision under Article IV (2) of the 1966 Geneva Agreement regarding the controversy arising from the contention of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that the 1899 Arbitral Award about the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is null and void.

Secretary General, I convey to you, Guyana's full acceptance of the decision and our determination to do all in our power to fulfill its objectives. We accept your Good Offices proposal for a final period of twelve months and that, if by the end of 2017 the Secretary General concludes that there has not been "significant progress" on a "full agreement" for the solution of the controversy, the Secretary General will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement under the Geneva Agreement.

Secretary General, as you are aware, we had lost confidence in the Good Offices Process as a result of Venezuela's actions over the last twenty-five years, and especially in the past twelve months that was envisaged as a final attempt at mediation. We nevertheless, in deference to you, and in the hope that Venezuela will cooperate more fully in making the Good Offices Process work on this second 'final' attempt at a negotiated settlement, we commit ourselves to giving it the best opportunity of success.

We accept that the Secretary General will identify his Personal Representative for that process and we pledge our full cooperation with them both.

We are pleased, of course, at your commitment to choose the International Court of Justice, pursuant to your powers under Article IV(2) of the Geneva Agreement in the event that, despite our best endeavours, the final one year Good Offices Process does not make significant progress for concluding a full agreement for the solution of the controversy.

I give you my assurance that, with regard to your indication that as a first step the Personal Representative will discuss with both Parties possible confidence-building measures to create a positive environment for bilateral dialogue, Guyana accepts both the spirit and the letter of your proposal and will explore every avenue to reach agreement on them.

I am writing to President Maduro to extend a hand of friendship and to assure him of Guyana's readiness to cooperate in the areas you have indicated and more generally in the time-bound Good Offices process.

I wish to thank you, Secretary General, for devoting so much time to our affairs and for the steadfastness of both you and your devoted staff to the sacred mission of the United Nations of upholding the law and maintaining the peace between nations – small and large alike.

I take this opportunity to send you my very best wishes for yourself and your family in the very many years that lie ahead.

Yours sincerely,

David Granger
President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

Annex 117

Letter from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (23 Feb. 2017)

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

23 February 2017

Excellency,

I would like to thank you for your letters of 22 December 2016 and 5 January 2017, reaffirming the commitment of your Government to resolving the border controversy with Venezuela. I hope that with the full engagement of both your Government and that of Venezuela, it will be possible to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement on the controversy.

Following the decision communicated to you by Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon in a letter dated 15 December 2016 to continue the good offices process during 2017, and after a thorough consideration of potential candidates, it is my pleasure to inform you that I have selected His Excellency Mr. Dag Halvor Nylander as my Personal Representative for the Border Controversy between your country and Venezuela.

As you may be aware, Mr. Nylander is a distinguished diplomat who was the Special Envoy of the Government of Norway to the Peace Process in Colombia. He is a lawyer with degrees from the Universities of Oslo and Aix-Marseille and has a deep knowledge of the region, having served at the Norwegian Embassies in Bogotá and Buenos Aires. Attached please find the curriculum vitae of Mr. Nylander and the terms of reference for his work.

Let me underscore, Excellency, my strong commitment to seeing the controversy between your country and Venezuela resolved.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

António Guterres

His Excellency
Mr. David Arthur Granger
President of the Republic of Guyana
Georgetown



Dag Halvor Nylander

PROFILE

- Mr. Nylander was the Norwegian Special Envoy to the Peace Process in Colombia from 2012 to 2016. As head of the Norwegian diplomatic team, he played a central role in securing the Colombian peace agreement.

- From 2009 to 2011, Mr. Nylander was Special Envoy of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.

- He served as Chargé d'Affaires of the Norwegian Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, from 2006 to 2008.

- From 2001 to 2004, Mr. Nylander was First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations in New York. From 1999 until 2001, he served as Second Secretary at the Norwegian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

- Mr. Nylander has worked as a lawyer for various firms and as an assistant judge.

- He has studied at the University of Oslo and the Université d'Aix-Marseille. He is fluent in English, Spanish and Norwegian.

February 2017

Terms of Reference

Personal Representative of the Secretary-General on the Border Controversy between Guyana and Venezuela

1. Background

Pursuant to the Geneva Agreement of 17 February 1966, Guyana and Venezuela have referred to the Secretary-General the decision as to the means of settlement of the controversy that arose as the result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the frontier between Venezuela and what is now Guyana is "null and void". A Good Offices Process has been conducted by the Secretary-General since 1990 with the aim of finding a mutually satisfactory solution to the controversy.

On 15 December 2016, the Secretary-General informed the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela of his conclusions on what constituted the most appropriate next steps for the solution of the border controversy between the two countries. The Secretary-General decided that the Good Offices Process will continue for one final year, until the end of 2017, with a strengthened mandate of mediation. He also decided that, if by the end of 2017, the Secretary-General concludes that no significant progress has been made toward arriving at a full agreement of the solution of the controversy, he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement, unless the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela jointly request that he refrain from doing so.

The Secretary-General decided to appoint a new Personal Representative to conduct the Good Offices Process on his behalf.

2. Mandate

In coordination with the Department of Political Affairs, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General will be responsible for the following functions, amongst others:

- Exploring with the parties possible confidence building measures (CBMs) that could be implemented in the short term, in order to promote a positive environment for dialogue.

- Engaging intensively with the Governments of Guyana and of Venezuela ("the parties") and exploring and proposing options for the solution of the outstanding border controversy between the two countries. These options should address not only the controversy that arose as the result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the border between Venezuela and what is now Guyana is "null and void", but also other relevant aspects of the bilateral relations between the parties, including maritime, environmental and cooperation issues.

- Analyzing the political impact of the proposed CBMs and options, assessing trends that might affect the Good Offices Process and recommending solutions/possible actions by the parties, the UN system, regional and sub-regional organisations or the International Community.

- Keeping the Secretary-General and, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) fully abreast of progress in the Good Offices Process.

- Maintaining communication with the UN Country Teams in Guyana and Venezuela about the Good Office Process and relevant trends and events.

- Engaging, where relevant, with diplomatic and donor representatives, academics, press, technical experts and other civil society representatives, in both Guyana and Venezuela, in support of the Good Offices Process.

In carrying out these functions, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General will:

- Liaise closely with DPA to provide up-to-date information and early warning on substantive political aspects of the Good Offices Process and on political developments that may affect the resolution of the controversy.

- Liaise closely with DPA in developing strategic approaches for resolving the differences between the parties, particularly with regard to the involvement of neighbouring states and regional/sub-regional organizations.

- Handle sensitive documentation and information with complete confidentiality and full awareness of cyber-security risks.

- Keep a complete record of all proposals made to or by the parties and meetings held and contacts had with them; manage and retain all records generated or received in the course of the Good Offices Process; and transfer all these records to DPA upon completion of his or her assignment.

3. **<u>Plan of Action</u>**

The mediator will carry out the following plan of action until the end of 2017:

- Undertake a preliminary assessment (e.g. contact with the parties, familiarization with legal and political background) of the controversy and formulate, in consultation with DPA, a strategic plan for mediation, detailing short, medium and long-term actions and objectives (1 month);

- In consultation with the parties, explore CBMs that could be implemented in the short term (2 months);

- Carry out the short-term and relevant medium-long-term actions detailed in the strategic plan described below (until the end of November 2017).

4. Reporting

The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General will report to the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

The first report (to be submitted after one month of the Personal Representative's appointment) will contain a preliminary assessment and a strategic plan.

The second report (to be submitted after the second month) will include possible CBMs.

The third report (to be submitted by the end of November 2017) will focus on progress made during the Good Offices Process and include recommendations for moving forward. In this last report, the mediator will take into account the decision of the Secretary-General, communicated to the parties on 15 December 2016, that he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement of the controversy if significant progress is not achieved by the end of 2017 (unless the two parties jointly request that he refrain from doing so).

The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General is also encouraged to submit any further reports that he or she might consider relevant (mission reports, meeting notes and/or other updates) through DPA on a regular basis in order to keep the Secretary-General informed of developments.

Annex 118

Letter from the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (1 Mar. 2017)

Ministry *of the* Presidency
Vlissengen Road, Bourda, Georgetown
Cooperative Republic *of* Guyana

2017-03-01

His Excellency António Guterres
Secretary General of the United Nations
Office of the Secretary General
United Nations Headquarters
New York, United States of America

Dear Secretary General,

Thank you for your letter of 23 February 2017, on the matter of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's controversy with the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. I thank you also, for the care you have given to it following on your predecessor's letter of 15 December 2016.

We have just marked the 51st anniversary of the signing of the *Geneva Agreement* in February 1966, on the eve of Guyana's independence. The practical step you have taken in the way forward toward the full resolution of this controversy is vital to our future.

I reassure you, again, of our full cooperation in furtherance of all aspects of the processes ahead. I welcome your selection of His Excellency Mr. Dag Halvor Nylander as your Personal Representative in the 'good offices' process as defined in his "Terms of Reference".

I assure you, and I will assure him directly, that the Government of Guyana will do all it can that is consistent with our sovereignty and territorial integrity to facilitate his mission as set out in those "Terms of Reference" following your predecessor's decision.

We look forward to hearing from Mr. Nylander in the near future.

Please accept, Secretary General, the assurances of my highest consideration.

David Granger
President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Annex 119

Letter from the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (11 Apr. 2017)

Ministry *of the* Presidency
Vlissengen Road, Bourda, Georgetown
Cooperative Republic *of* Guyana

April 11, 2017

His Excellency António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Office of the Secretary General
United Nations Headquarters
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
United States of America

Dear Secretary General,

I am writing to acknowledge your letter of 27 March 2017. I am pleased to advise that the Cooperative Republic of Guyana is preparing to receive H.E. Dag Halvor Nylander, your Personal Representative in the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela for discussions later this week.

I wish to iterate my Government's commitment to cooperate with Ambassador Nylander in the execution of his mandate. I express again my appreciation for your efforts towards the resolution of the controversy.

Please accept, Secretary General, the assurances of my highest consideration.

David Granger
President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Annex 120

Note Verbale from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Guyana, No. 01021/2017 (30 June 2017)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
254 South Road & Shiv Chanderpaul Dr.,
Georgetown, Guyana
Telephone: 592-226-9080 Fax: 592-223-5241
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Note: 01021/2017

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana presents its compliments to the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and has the honour to refer to Note Verbale II.2.G12.E1.P.60.3/141 dated June 26, 2017 and its attachment from the Hon. Marleny Josefina Contreras Hernandez, Minister of People's Power for Tourism, under the subject: "XXVII Reunion Del Comite Especial De Turismo Sostenible (CETS-28) Isla de Margarita (Porlamar), Venezuela del 10 al 11 de Julio de 2017."

The Ministry wishes to register its strong protest and rejection of the map depicted at page 6 under section 10 of the referenced attachment. The map purports to include Guyana's sovereign territory as that of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and is wholly inconsistent with the 1899 Arbitral Award that constituted a full and final settlement of the land boundary. The Ministry is compelled to remind the Government of Venezuela about the sanctity of treaties under international law, and to emphasize that unilateral acts and unlawful assertions of sovereignty over Guyana's territory do not in any way affect the permanence of the boundary as established by the 1899 Award. In view of the offensive and unlawful nature of this map, the Ministry is compelled to return this document to Venezuela. The Ministry further requests that the document in which this map is included, be withdrawn from circulation.

Further, the Ministry wishes to signal its intention to bring this matter to the attention of the Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela the assurances of its highest consideration.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS GUYANA

GEORGETOWN
JUNE 30, 2017

Annex 121

Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (29 July 2017)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
254 South Road & Shiv Chanderpaul Dr.,
Georgetown, Guyana
Telephone: 592-226-9080 Fax: 592-223-5241
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July 29, 2017

H.E Ambassador Dag Nylander
Personal Representative of the
Secretary General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
New York.

Dear Dag,

I was on the verge of sending you the attached letter pursuant to our conversations in Georgetown, when your letter of the 26th arrived. Since it is pertinent to that letter as well, I am sending it to you along with these additional comments. Please treat it as my principal response along with these additional comments.

A word about CBMs. I think we need to be careful with words. CBMs, as we said from the beginning, are relevant to improving the atmosphere in which efforts are pursued to resolve the core issue. They have no other relevance in relation to 'progress' in resolving the 'controversy' and that could be misleading if they do not in fact improve that atmosphere; they are not a substitute for 'progress'. Guyana has had 51 years of what looked like confidence building measures only to find that they were a smoke screen for sustaining, not resolving, the 'core issue'. I urge you to be mindful of the distinction - Guyana will be.

We are therefore surprised about your statement "I have not said that the institution of confidence-building measures is "not a measure of 'significant progress'" towards arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy". This matter was clearly discussed at our last meeting and we fully appreciate that it is the Secretary-General who will decide whether significant progress has been made, but that he will make that determination

taking into account your third and final report at the end of November 2017. It is a cause for concern that this has once again become a question as we move forward with this final stage of the mediation process. As previously indicated, Guyana cannot accept the CBMs as a measure of "significant progress" towards, or their inclusion as "other elements" for, resolution of the controversy. Nonetheless, Guyana remains willing to consider CBMs consistent with your Terms of Reference.

With reference to paragraph four of your letter under reference, which relates to the role of CBMs, you will recall of course that we had submitted to you proposals for sustainable forestry management within the context of CBMs. We have not had thus far any reaction to these proposals. The mandate as far as this deals with CBMs qualifies their import "to promote a positive environment for dialogue". We have said many times that we have on several occasions engaged Venezuela on a number of cooperation measures over the years.

I look forward to receiving your "refined dialogue proposal" for the first bilateral dialogue, mindful that in order to give the mediation process a meaningful chance during the four months that remain, the agenda must focus first and foremost on resolution on the core issue of the "controversy" on the nullity of the Award rather than secondary issues.

I, too, hope we can move forward with the clarity I hope I have provided in these exchanges.

With every good wish.

Yours sincerely,

Carl B Greenidge
Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Attch:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

254 South Road & Shiv Chanderpaul Dr.,
Georgetown, Guyana
Telephone: 592-226-9080 Fax: 592-223-5241
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Website: www.minfor.gov.gy

July 25, 2017

H.E Ambassador Dag Nylander
Personal Representative of the
Secretary General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
New York.

Dear Dag,

I write to express my appreciation for the conversations which we shared during your visit to Georgetown for the July 24th meeting. As I indicated, there are some matters on which I would be writing.

We have noted that Venezuela has sought to engage the Secretary General directly on issues of the Guyana-Venezuela controversy outside of the bounds of the mediation process committed to you. Whilst we are not surprised that Venezuela has selectively rejected the Secretary General's decision as to the means of settlement, there is now – as you put it – a "twin track approach" on the part of Venezuela. We are profoundly disturbed about this behaviour. It is fundamentally inconsistent with equality among the Parties and undermines Guyana's confidence in the mediation process. We do hope that the UN would seek to ensure that both Parties are held to the same standard and not facilitate any further departure from the process.

I would like to restate what I had put to you in my letter of June 30, 2017 namely:

> "*2. I also repeat our proposal to convene as soon as practicable a bilateral Ministerial Meeting under your chairmanship in Port of Spain to explore views on the 'core' issue of the controversy, viz. Venezuela's contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 is 'null and void'.*"

After all, that is the 'controversy' as defined again in the first paragraph of your Terms of Reference – and of course by both Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and Secretary General Guterres – and the process has not engaged it yet. I know that there are some necessary steps preceding it, one being guidelines for such a substantial discussion. You have sent us comprehensive guidelines; we have given them careful consideration and provided our response to you. We would expect that the amendments made would be taken into account and hope that both sides would be held accountable to them.

And, beyond the guidelines, is the agenda. I want to make it abundantly clear that this meeting is about the 'controversy' and it has to be clearly defined. I have to say this insistently, because it has been Venezuela's constant ruse over more than fifty years to insist on its contention of nullity but never to discuss it, only to seek diversion from it. The agenda must not allow this; after all, it is whether there is 'significant progress' in relation to this 'controversy' that is the essential issue.

One further matter. As we had noted during the meeting, your Terms of Reference as set out in the 23 February 2017 letter of the Secretary-General, make clear that the mediation process and potential judicial process are inextricably linked. In particular, in regard to your third and final report to be submitted by the end of November 2017, the following is clearly indicated:

> *"In this last report, the mediator will take into account the decision of the Secretary General, communicated to the parties on 15 December 2016, that he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement of the controversy if significant progress is not achieved by the end of 2017 (unless the two parties jointly request that he refrain from doing so.)"*

However, the reality is that Venezuela has not accepted your Terms of Reference, yet Guyana is being asked to cooperate with the mediation process. In this process one Party has arrogated to itself the right to pick and choose what is convenient to its interests while rejecting the rest of the Secretary General's decision. While Guyana still supports the

expeditious meeting of the parties with a view to addressing the 'core issue' of the controversy, it cannot but be troubled when the other Party does not respect the Secretary General's decision and your Terms of Reference, let alone accept the definition of the controversy to be resolved.

Guyana must thus repeat its entirely reasonable insistence that the guidelines and any prospective agenda for a bilateral meeting make expressly clear the exact framework within which the Parties are under an obligation to engage in good faith. It surely cannot be demanded of Guyana to engage in an open-ended mediation process where acceptance of the guidelines is not mutual and even the question to be discussed is not settled.

Finally, we remain committed to continuing cooperation with your mandate and await your proposals on next steps within your Terms of Reference consistent with the views above.

Yours sincerely,

Carl B. Greenidge
Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Annex 122

Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (19 Sept. 2017)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Georgetown, Guyana
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19 September, 2017

H.E. Ambassador Dag Nylander
Personal Representative of the
Secretary General of the United Nations
United Nations Secretariat

Dear Dag,

I write to register my distress at our exchange yesterday afternoon at the UN. Nothing prepared me for the loss of confidence induced by it. I am particularly disturbed that at this very late stage the Parties could be expected to "agree to disagree" on the relevance of the definition of the controversy and instead address only the issue of the consequences of the controversy. Furthermore, this redefinition lends itself to a necessary prolongation of the mediation process despite its manifest failure to achieve any progress whatsoever. I remind you of the care with which the two Secretaries General had defined the controversy.

Your mandate is to resolve the controversy arising from Venezuela's contention of nullity; there is no other controversy to be resolved. There is no question that the Parties must discuss **"the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela which has arisen as a result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is null and void"**. Guyana is within its rights to insist that Venezuela fully respects the decision of the Secretary-General and that you stay within your Terms of Reference.

I am also disturbed that what you initially proposed as a brief informal meeting between myself and the Venezuelan Foreign Minister in the corridors of the General Assembly without negotiating teams is now suddenly transformed into a full-fledged bilateral meeting. There can be no doubt that Guyana has cooperated fully with your mandate throughout 2017. But now, at the eleventh hour, we are suddenly told that there has been progress and that we should participate in a substantive bilateral meeting.

But that progress to which you speak is not progress between the parties. You speak of progress as if it were a generalized condition devoid of context. However, this progress of which we are only now being made aware has emanated from some undefined proposal by Venezuéla made without our knowledge, and without our input, and which presumably does not address the question of nullity, this being the controversy to be resolved.

Your meeting with me yesterday has put me on notice. Guyana remains committed to a bilateral meeting for the full discussion of the core issue of the controversy, but insisting on such a meeting without Venezuela's acceptance of the Secretary-General's decision is, with the greatest respect, in excess of your mandate.

The Secretaries General have been meticulous and unambiguous in defining what they mean by 'progress'. It has to be **'significant progress toward arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy'**. It seems that this clear decision is being conveniently ignored. In all the months of mediation not once have these high standards of "significant progress" or the specifics of a "full agreement" or the contention of nullity which is the "core issue" been explored. It is as if these defining requirements were encumbrances to the mandate, better ignored and left unexplored. This approach avoids the specific decision of the Secretaries General and prolongs the same failed good offices process that has been used to pressure Guyana and prevent her development for the past fifty years.

I am quite happy to greet my opposite number from Venezuela; I have done so frequently. But there can be no bilateral meeting in the context of your mandate without an agreed agenda, and unconditional acceptance by Venezuela of the Secretary-General's decision, including the definition of the controversy to be discussed. Guyana is fully within its rights to insist that you respect that decision which is the sole basis of your mandate. Should these basic requirements be satisfied, Guyana would be ready to participate in a bilateral meeting subject to being given sufficient time to assemble its negotiating team.

Yours sincerely,

Carl B. Greenidge
Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Annex 123

Address of the President of the Republic of Guyana to the U.N. General Assembly, 72nd Session, U.N. Doc A/72/PV.7 (20 Sept. 2017)

United Nations A/72/PV.7

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 September 2017, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák .... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the earthquakes in Mexico

The President: Before we begin this morning's meeting, I wish to express, on behalf of the General Assembly, our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Mexico in the light of the tragic earthquake that rocked Mexico City yesterday. We regret the loss of life and stand with Mexico at this time of grief.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luis Videgaray Caso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United States of Mexico.

Mr. Videgaray Caso (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and the people of Mexico, to thank the Assembly from the bottom of our hearts for the countless expressions of international solidarity from our fellow members of the United Nations.

Yesterday a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Mexico City and various areas in the centre of the country. The death toll currently stands at 219, with hundreds injured and still more whose whereabouts are unknown. Our current priority is carrying out rescue work and caring for the injured. It has been a harsh blow to Mexico, but we will be able to recover, thanks primarily to the extraordinary solidarity and generosity of our people, who have taken to the streets and to the more than 50 areas affected by the quake, where we need everyone's help.

I particularly wish to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, who called me personally, and the Secretariat, which has been in contact with us from the outset, providing us with advice, support and help in identifying the specific aid we need. Special thanks also go to the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system for helping us to identify the countries that have the specialized teams and equipment we need for rescue operations. We have contacted them and they are already sending assistance. Support for the rescue efforts is currently under way in Mexico City. I thank the President and all of the countries that are generously supporting Mexico at this very difficult time.

Address by Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Niinistö: Our thoughts today are with the people of Mexico and the Caribbean.

I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. Finland fully supports your six priorities and we appreciate the focus on people as your mandate's centrepiece.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Secretary-General António Guterres. His determination to reform the United Nations is laudable. Transparency, accountability, efficiency and gender balance should be the guiding principles of the United Nations system. I also welcome his focus on conflict prevention, which, when successful, saves lives and financial resources. Finland continues to advocate the use of mediation in conflict resolution, which can prevent conflicts and decrease human suffering. Those who are marginalized must be given a voice in peace processes. Women, children and young people often pay the highest price in conflicts, but they can also help to find a way out of crises. Finland has helped to establish a Nordic network of women mediators that aims to sustain peace through women's inclusive and meaningful participation in every phase of a peace process.

Peacekeeping and special political missions are at the core of the United Nations mandate. With experience of United Nations operations since 1956, Finland supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to reform and make United Nations peacekeeping more effective. Following the pledge we made in 2015, Finland has significantly increased its participation in United Nations police missions. Finnish police officers, including a specialized team for sexual and gender-based violence, are now deployed in seven United Nations peacekeeping operations. It is my firm view that no United Nations peacekeeper or any other United Nations personnel should be associated with misconduct in any shape or form. There must be zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse, and the Secretary-General's initiative for a circle of leadership is timely and welcome.

In wars, there are no winners, and yet conflicts continue. In 2016, 157,000 lives were lost in violent conflicts globally. There are almost 68 million refugees in the world today. The conflicts in the Middle East, Africa and eastern Ukraine are all examples of untold human suffering, and they are not the only ones. The international community has not succeeded in maintaining peace and security.

The grave situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is an urgent concern. The North Korean nuclear-weapon programme is a threat to global peace and must be stopped. The Security Council's cooperation on North Korea has been successful, and it is important to ensure that unity can prevail. At the same time, North Korea has continued its provocations, and such behaviour cannot be tolerated. Finland, as part of the European Union, stands firmly behind the sanctions and urges everyone to do the same. We will be able to find a solution only through negotiations, and the North Korean Government must participate without preconditions.

Nuclear weapons represent a severe threat to humankind. As long as they exist there is a risk of a catastrophe. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of global non-proliferation and the foundation for nuclear disarmament. Finland's approach to the issue is result-oriented and pragmatic. It is crucial to ensure that the countries possessing nuclear weapons are on board for any negotiations. I call on all nuclear-weapon States and countries possessing such weapons to take concrete action on disarmament as soon as possible. It is also important to ensure that the nuclear deal on Iran is honoured by all parties, and I welcome the recent talks on strategic stability between the United States and the Russian Federation. We hope that they will re-start the arms-control talks in Europe and globally.

We must also pay closer attention to other threats, of which I would like to focus on two examples.

First, countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism is a shared priority. As a global body, the United Nations is well placed to promote the fight against terrorism. I look forward to the leadership of the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in that area. Secondly, we must take health security more seriously. Diseases travel across borders rapidly and synthetic biology is an emerging threat. We need better prevention and national preparedness, and a global, multi-partner collaboration. The Global Health Security Agenda is an important forum in this area, and Finland and Australia are co-chairing an alliance in support of health-security capacity-building. We must take action before the next pandemic arrives.

Population dynamics are of great importance. Although the most rapid phase of global population growth is receding, in many places populations are still

growing. That is particularly the case in some African countries, where the potential exists for a four-fold increase by the end of the century. Growing populations often result in rapid urbanization. Cities offer people many possibilities, and urbanization's positive potential is huge. But if it is mismanaged it can also increase rootlessness, hopelessness and even radicalization. One antidote is to ensure that all individuals can reach their potential. Economic opportunities and human rights are vital. People must have a positive stake in their own societies. That will require dedicated efforts to empower individuals, including ensuring their access to education and basic services.

Gender equality is a key priority in Finnish foreign policy. As a HeForShe IMPACT Champion, I attach great personal importance to this. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and ensuring sexual rights and comprehensive sexuality education for all are key factors in sustainable development. As a candidate for the UNESCO Executive Board, Finland also considers gender equality, high-quality education and fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to be priorities.

Climate change binds the South and the North together. None of us will be spared its destructive effects. Besides the direct environmental impact, it affects security and is a cause of forced migration. The rapid implementation of the Paris Climate Change Agreement is even more urgent than it was a year ago. The Agreement has a clear goal — keeping rising temperatures below 2°C. At the moment we are not on that path, and we must speed up our efforts, because the window for action is closing. Our transition from fossil fuels to renewables and energy efficiency must be much faster than what we are seeing right now. Everyone's efforts are needed.

The Arctic is at the forefront of climate change. It is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. If we lose it, we will lose the whole world. We must find effective ways to slow down the warming of the Arctic. One of those is reducing emissions of black carbon and methane and their impact on the Arctic. The sources of black carbon are well known and solutions exist. What we need is shared willingness and determined steps to deal with the issue. The emissions should be reduced in the Arctic area first and foremost, but global action is also needed, as much of the black carbon is transported in from outside the area. I firmly believe that tackling this issue will be a genuine win-win for the whole of humankind. Finland currently chairs the Arctic Council, and combating climate change is one of our priorities.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finland celebrates 100 years of independence this year, and the theme of our centennial is "Together". Since our independence began, Finland has supported and respected the rules-based international order. In our interconnected world, promoting national interests also requires international efforts. I strongly believe that global challenges and threats must be addressed not by individual action alone but by the international community. Peace and security, human rights and development belong to all of us. Only together can we make this world a better place.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Almazbek Atambaev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Almazbek Atambaev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Almazbek Atambaev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Atambaev (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere condolences to the people of Mexico following the catastrophic earthquake there.

My ancient people have gone through a long and difficult journey of historical development and formation. Centuries ago, we developed our own written language and established our own multi-ethnic State known to history as the Great Kyrgyz Khanate. Unfortunately, subsequent historical events led to the loss of the Khanate and the destruction of the greater part

of our people. We used to be referred to as a vanishing ethnic group. Accordingly, freedom, independence and a sovereign State became our national ideals and an impassioned driving force for our people throughout their historic journey. That journey culminated in 1991 in our achievement of sovereignty.

However, our struggle for freedom, democracy and justice continue. I am proud of my freedom-loving people, who in the past 12 years have executed two popular revolutions against a dictatorial regime and have shown that the only true source of power in the Kyrgyz Republic is the people.

> "In other countries similar events could have led to the destruction of democracy and entailed significant strife, but the Kyrgyz people underwent difficult circumstances and preserved their democracy, which I hope will serve as a model for other countries."

Those are the words of the Secretary-General, and we are eternally grateful to Mr. António Guterres for his balanced assessment of historic events during our country's most recent past.

Like all other countries that have chosen the path of sustainable development, the Kyrgyz Republic is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The well-being and prosperity of humankind is our main goal. Despite the impact of the global economic and financial crisis, the decline in energy prices and the sanctions-based standoff of the global Powers, the gross domestic product of the Kyrgyz Republic has been steadily growing for the past few years, and our currency, the Kyrgyzstan som, is one of the most stable of the countries that make up the Commonwealth of Independent States.

We are embarking on several major projects, including the improvement of our infrastructure. We have achieved energy independence and a stable energy sector. The Kyrgyz Republic, a country that once went nowhere, has reinvented itself as a country of transit.

We are meeting all of our commitments with respect to the social fabric of the country. Salaries for teachers and doctors are on the rise, and pensions and other social benefits are also gradually increasing. Over the past five years, the rate of extreme poverty among the population has decreased by a factor of 4.5.

We have begun a meaningful and systematic campaign to rid the Government of the scourge of corruption, in particular at the top levels of power. In our country, the privileged circles and untouchables of six or seven years ago no longer exist.

We are engaged in dialogue today on equal terms with all our international partners. As we build our independence in foreign policy, we base it exclusively on protecting our national interests, with special priority for regional integration. The borders that we share with our neighbours are becoming gateways to friendship and good neighbourliness.

Our main achievements in recent years have been peace, consensus and stability. The country is changing before our eyes. The Kyrgyz Republic is the first and only country in the post-Soviet Central Asian region with a parliamentary democracy. International organizations, including the United Nations, recognize the Kyrgyz Republic as one of the most free and stable States with a strong civil society in Eurasia.

One achievement of particular note is the introduction of a new electoral model using biometric technologies to identify voters and count votes electronically. We successfully used that system in the 2015 parliamentary elections and in a referendum held last year. The democratic process and openness that characterized the electoral campaign in the Kyrgyz Republic were validated by international observers and, most important, by the country's political parties' acceptance of their outcome. Campaigning is now in full gear for the presidential elections to be held on 15 October. In our view, fair and transparent elections are crucial to our country's stability, and we are determined to achieve that. I firmly believe that our newly elected Government will continue to advance its development as a democratic and open State.

Kyrgyzstan is currently developing a long-term national strategy for sustainable development through 2040. Our strategic goals for future sustainable development include accelerated economic development that provides people with decent jobs; ensuring economic and social well-being; public security and a high quality of life; and developing a parliamentary democracy and a strong civil society.

One of the key initiatives of that strategy is the "Clean Society" *Taza Koom* initiative, designed to develop and promote the principles of electronic Government and open society in our country. During his visit to my country, Secretary-General Guterres noted that the Kyrgyz Republic is not only a pioneer

of democracy in Central Asia, it is also becoming a pioneer in building a digital environment as well as a digital economy.

Based on all the steps that we have taken, I believe that in the near future the Kyrgyz Republic will become an economically developed, socially prosperous and secure country with a developed agro-industrial complex and manufacturing potential. It will be a secure country that will be safe to live and visit in a framework of sustainable tourism, supported by its membership in the Mountain Partnership, with its unique natural, historical and cultural monuments along the great Silk Road. It will be a country of healthy, educated, cultured, free and prosperous people governed by a fair and accountable leadership.

The year 2040 will mark 1,200 years since the advent of the Kyrgyz Khanate in the tenth century, when Kyrgyz statehood reached its apex. We owe it to both our history and our future to reach 2040 as a strong, self-reliant and highly developed State.

The consequences of climate change now threaten all of us to some degree, and mountainous countries such as the Kyrgyz Republic are on the front lines, owing to the complex ecosystems associated with such terrain. The problems of climate change are having an impact on every sector of the Kyrgyz Republic's economy and are causing significant damage from increasingly frequent natural disasters in mountainous areas, including mudflows, landslides, floods and avalanches.

We are particularly concerned about the accelerated melting of Kyrgyz glaciers, which are natural reservoirs and a source of fresh water not only for Central Asia but for the whole world. According to forecasts, by 2025 the total glacier area in the Kyrgyz Republic could decrease by 30 to 40 percent, which could lead to a drop in the water levels of Central Asian rivers. By 2100 the glaciers of the Kyrgyz Republic could vanish altogether. Our country is therefore promoting the implementation of joint projects to preserve glaciers in mountain ecosystems of upstream countries.

The basic essence of the transition to sustainable development is a matter of the survival of humankind and the preservation of the biosphere. Due to climate change, various rare animals and the biodiversity of our mountain ecosystems are threatened with extinction.

In particular, since the nineties, the global population of snow leopards has fallen by half. In 2013, we initiated and conducted the Global Snow Leopard Forum, marking the start of a noble mission: to make preserving that species and its ecosystem a single strategic nature environmental task. Only three weeks ago in Bishkek, we held the second International Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Forum. One of its main outcomes was a proposal by the Kyrgyz Republic to initiate a multi-country project at the regional level, with an emphasis on preserving our national and, no less important, global biodiversity.

In the modern world, mankind is forgetting its origins. In a chaotically fragmented world with increasing divisions, all nations need unifying factors and ideas rather than political ideas that divide peoples over religious beliefs or language. In that regard, our country has come up with a whole range of international projects and measures. In particular, to showcase the greatness of the nomadic civilization to the international community, the Kyrgyz Republic has launched a unique project, the World Nomad Games. The General Assembly provided international recognition for this project for its contribution to intercultural dialogue. Next year, we will be hosting the third Nomad Games, and we invite everyone to participate in them.

In July, we held an international forum on "Altai civilization and related peoples of the Altaic language family". Its main goal was the development and popularization of common heritage and cultural exchange between peoples having common Altai roots, strengthening and expanding cooperation among the States belonging to the Altaic language family.

The international conference initiated by my country on the theme "Islam and the modern secular State" is dedicated to the strengthening of peace and the development of intercultural dialogue. It will be held on 28 and 29 September in Bishkek. We believe it is important to study experiences and exchange information on the interaction of the State and religious institutions and civil societies in secular countries.

All those initiatives represent a contribution by the Kyrgyz Republic to the preservation of peace and stability and the development of cultural diversity and tolerance as a counterweight to contemporary threats of terrorism and radicalism, and we believe that they will have fruitful results.

One of the key factors in good living standards in Central Asia is our mutually beneficial use of water and energy resources. The Kyrgyz Republic

has consistently advocated the development and introduction in the region of economic mechanisms for water use. The world's limited water resources will sooner or later lead to an understanding that water is an economic resource that requires reasonable use. I wish to emphasize in particular that water-use issues in Central Asia can and should be solved only by the States of the region through an open and constructive dialogue, taking into account the interests and needs of all countries. It is unacceptable for international and regional organizations to impose their own approaches and ways of developing cooperation in this area on the countries of Central Asia.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the problem of managing the numerous uranium tailings in the Kyrgyz Republic that we inherited from the Soviet Union. They pose a threat to the entire region. We all know that a number of large uranium-tailing dump sites are located in close proximity to rivers and water sources. In the event of an accidents at a tailing site, pollution of the region's rivers with highly toxic waste could lead to large-scale ecological and humanitarian consequences and would imperil the lives and health of millions of people and even socioeconomic development in every Central Asian country.

That is why, in 2012, the Kyrgyz Republic initiated a proposal to adopt a special resolution on the matter of the uranium legacy in Central Asia, and the General Assembly adopted that text as resolution 68/218 in 2013. In the past five years we have made significant progress in solving problems of radiation and environmental safety. Now we see that it is time for a new Assembly resolution that takes account of the results that have been achieved. Today, here in New York, we will be having a special meeting on the issue, initiated by the Kyrgyz Republic and others. We believe that the meeting will enable us to come up with new programmes and joint measures aimed at recultivating uranium-tailing sites.

With regard to matters of peace and security and the sustainable development of all countries on the planet, I also want to mention the problem of terrorism. The international community must step up its efforts to fight terrorism, extremism and related problems such as illegal drug trafficking, trafficking in humans and arms, and money laundering. Unfortunately, the international community's measures have been inadequate and have sometimes led to confrontation between States, while it is only by joint action and efforts that we can effectively counter the threats of terrorism and extremism.

I should not omit to mention the current situation in Myanmar and the plight of the Muslims there. Kyrgyzstan resolutely condemns the violence being perpetrated against the ethnic minority in Myanmar, and we earnestly call on all parties to the conflict to engage in peaceful negotiations.

We also urge all countries around the globe to uphold their commitment to the provisions of the international conventions on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

It is encouraging to see the increasing role that the United Nations is playing in our collective efforts to confront the challenges and threats that we face today. But as that role increases, so does its accountability. It is the 15 members of the Security Council that currently decide the fate of the world. The consensus they reach determines matters of war and peace, security and stability in various parts of our planet. Moreover, the five permanent members of the Council can always block any decision. Kyrgyzstan therefore advocates the adoption of urgent measures to improve the Security Council that will enable it to take into consideration the interests of a majority of States.

Our world will continue to develop and change. It will continue to confront difficulties and crises, make breakthroughs and have successes in development. But all of us are united by the desire to preserve peace and concord on Earth. For that to happen, we need to provide equitable conditions and possibilities for development in every country, so that no one is left behind or left to cope with troubles and problems alone.

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and other agreements on the international agenda must remain the main priority of our joint action as an international community. Only together can we build a world based on cultural diversity; on dialogue, not sanctions; on preventive measures and greater accountability; a world where no one will be forgotten or left behind. So let us unite our efforts and help all people on Earth to live better and attain even a little more joy. Together we can build a world that provides a dignified life for everyone on our planet Earth.

(*spoke in Kyrgyz; translation provided by the delegation*)

As I end my speech, I would now like to address my beloved Kyrgyz people, my dear compatriots, in Kyrgyz. A thousand years later, the Kyrgyz nomads

have found their way again. For us to find that way, thousands of our forefathers had to sacrifice their lives and thousands of our mothers were left blinded by grief. Are there any mountains where no Kyrgyz bones are buried? Are there any valleys where no Kyrgyz blood has flowed?

In a few days' time, the Kyrgyz people will elect their new leader. Let us not lose our way by following the oligarchs and leaders of other countries. We cannot let others trample on Kyrgyz leaders ever again. We cannot let our national wealth and our lands be sold off or given away again while ordinary people suffer. Let us not be deceived by money. Let us not be deceived by fancy words. Let us not look deceitfully at one another. Let us be honest with one another. We must preserve our dignity and our unity. We must preserve our motherland. We must preserve our people.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Almazbek Atambayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aliyev: For more than 25 years, Armenia has occupied 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan — Nagorno Karabakh and seven other regions of our country. Nagorno Karabakh is an ancient and historical part of Azerbaijan. As a result of Armenian aggression, almost 20 per cent of the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan is under Armenian occupation. More than 1 million of Azerbaijanis have become refugees and internally displaced persons. Armenia has conducted a policy of ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis in Armenia, in Nagorno Karabakh and seven other regions of Azerbaijan.

Armenia committed genocide against Azerbaijanis in Khojaly. The Khojaly genocide is already officially recognized by more than 10 countries. On February 26, 1992, Armenia committed war crimes, killing 613 peaceful residents of Khojaly, among them 106 women and 63 children. One of those war criminals who committed that terrible crime against humanity is the current Armenian President.

Leading international organizations adopted resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the territory of Azerbaijan. In 1993, the Security Council adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993), and 884 (1993), demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from the territory of Azerbaijan. Other international organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, adopted similar decisions and resolutions.

Armenia does not implement them. For 24 years, Armenia has ignored Security Council resolutions, and unfortunately it has not been punished for that. In some cases, Security Council resolutions are implemented within days. In our case, resolutions have gone unimplemented for 24 years. That is a demonstration of double standards, and it is unacceptable. International sanctions must be imposed on Armenia. A major United Nations reform should be the creation of a mechanism for implementing Security Council resolutions.

Armenia does everything in its power to maintain the status quo and block substantive negotiations. The co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group — France, Russia and the United States — have stated on several occasions that the status quo is unacceptable. How can such a corrupt, failed State, ruled by a despotic, medieval regime, violate international law for so many years and ignore Security Council resolutions and statements by the world's leading countries? Because there is a double standard. There is no international pressure on the aggressor, no international sanctions imposed on the Armenian dictatorship. That policy must end. It is not only a demonstration of injustice, it also creates the impression that the Armenian dictatorship can continue its policy of terror.

In April 2016, Armenia committed another war crime on the line of contact, attacking our cities and villages. In that attack, six Azerbaijani civilians were killed, among them one child, and 26 were wounded. Hundreds of our houses were destroyed. Azerbaijan had to defend its citizens. Through a successful counter-attack, Azerbaijan liberated some territories in the three occupied areas — Agdere, Fuzuli and Jabrayil — and installed its national flag in the liberated territories. The Armenian leadership should not forget that lesson, or the results of their next provocation will be more painful for them.

When it loses on the battlefield, Armenia resorts to the cruel policy of attacking our cities and villages. On 4 July, Armenia launched a targeted attack on Alkhanli village in Fuzuli district with 82 and 120 millimetre mortars and grenade launchers, killing two civilians, two-year old Zahra Guliyeva and her grandmother. On 7 August, a 13-year-old boy in the Tovuz area, which borders Armenia, was wounded by Armenian soldiers. The international community must stop Armenian fascism and terror.

Azerbaijan is committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, but at the same time it will defend its citizens, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, if Armenian military provocations continue. If necessary, Azerbaijan will again punish the aggressor, as it did in April 2016. The Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno Karabakh conflict must be resolved on the basis of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be completely restored.

Despite the enormous difficulties caused by the Armenian occupation, Azerbaijan has developed rapidly and successfully. It is an active member of the United Nations, and in 2011 was elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, receiving the votes of 155 countries. An absolute majority of Member States demonstrated their support for Azerbaijan and its policy. For Azerbaijan, which at that time had been independent for only 20 years, that was a great success.

Azerbaijan is a stable, modern, democratic country. The development of democracy and the protection of human rights are among the top priorities of our Government. All fundamental freedoms are fully guaranteed in Azerbaijan, including freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly and of religion.

Azerbaijan is one of the world’s recognized centres of multiculturalism, which is a State policy in Azerbaijan, where representatives of all ethnic groups and religions live in peace and harmony. In Azerbaijan we declared 2016 a Year of Multiculturalism and 2017 a Year of Islamic Solidarity.

Unlike Armenia, which is a mono-ethnic country with almost no national minorities and where xenophobia is a State policy, Azerbaijan is a multi-ethnic country. Our society’s cultural, ethnic and religious diversity is a big asset. In that regard, Armenia, where Islamophobia has reached a peak, has committed many acts of vandalism, destroying all mosques in the occupied territories.

Azerbaijan has hosted numerous international events aimed at strengthening interreligious dialogue. Among them are the seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the World Religious Leaders Summit, the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, on four occasions, and the Baku International Humanitarian Forum, on five occasions, as well as other important events.

As a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Council of Europe, in 2008 Azerbaijan launched the Baku Process, which is supported by the United Nations. The main goal of the Baku Process is to strengthen dialogue, partnership and cooperation between the Muslim world and Europe.

In 2015, Azerbaijan hosted the first European Games, in which 6,000 athletes from 50 countries participated. This year, we hosted the fourth Islamic Solidarity Games, with almost 3,000 athletes from 54 countries, so in the space of two years our capital city of Baku was the venue for both the European and the Islamic Games, in a major contribution to promoting multiculturalism. In a demonstration of Azerbaijan’s status as one of the world’s leading sporting countries, the Azerbaijani team came second overall at the first European Games and first at the Islamic Solidarity Games. Further proof of our achievement in this area is the fact that Azerbaijan finished fourteenth overall at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games in terms of medals, winning 18 in total.

Azerbaijan has made significant progress in social and economic development. Our economy has more than tripled since 2004, and we have created more than 1.6 million jobs, keeping our unemployment level one of the lowest in the world at 5 per cent. We

have prioritized poverty reduction; our poverty levels have gone from more than 40 per cent in 2004 to 5 or 6 per cent. Our hard-currency reserves are equal to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and our State's foreign debt is less than 20 per cent of GDP. In 2009 Azerbaijan was named leading reformer of the world in the World Bank's *Doing Business* report. The Davos World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report for 2016-2017 ranked Azerbaijan thirty-seventh of 138 countries. In 2015, Azerbaijan received the South-South Award in recognition of its outstanding achievements in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, and since 2010 has been classified as a country with high human development. Our rapid development of our space industry has enabled Azerbaijan to join the world's space club with Azerspace and Azersky, its two telecommunication and field observation satellites, with a third, Azerspace-2, to be launched soon.

Today, Azerbaijan exports intellectual as well as industrial and agricultural products. Our State agency for services and social innovations for citizens, ASAN, is a model for modern public relations and services. With 251 services under one roof, the agency's absolute transparency and zero tolerance for corruption and bribery has made it attractive to many countries. As a purely Azerbaijani brand in the five years since it was founded, it has provided more than 1.6 million services to 5 million people. The total number of applications is 17 million and the public's rating of ASAN is 98 per cent. In 2015, in recognition of its contribution to excellence, creativity and simplification of the delivery of public services, ASAN received the United Nations Public Service Award.

The main goal of our policies is improving the lives of our citizens. Since 2004, salaries have increased by 5.6 times and pensions 8.2 times. With no foreign financial support, we have built almost 100 new settlements and towns for refugees and internally displaced persons affected by the Armenian occupation. We have thereby improved the living conditions of more than 250,000 people, providing them with new houses and flats and building 152 schools, 59 medical centres, and 60 kindergartens in their towns and settlements. Overall, since 2004 we have built or renovated more than 3,000 schools and 600 hospitals and medical centres. Azerbaijan's literacy levels are close to 100 per cent. Every year more than 5 million people — half of the population — receive medical check-ups totally financed by the State budget.

Azerbaijan plays an important role in the global energy market. As a reliable supplier of oil and gas to international markets, we provide energy security for many countries throughout the world. Today Azerbaijan, together with its international partners, is close to completing the $40 billion Southern Gas Corridor project, one of the largest infrastructure projects in the world.

Another important priority of ours is transportation. Situated as it is between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is making wise use of its geographical location to become one of Eurasia's leading transportation hubs. In recent years we have built six international airports and 11,000 kilometres of modern highways and roads. Azerbaijan's 270 vessels make up the biggest trade fleet in the Caspian Sea, and our modern shipbuilding yards are capable of building all types and sizes of ships. We are also modernizing our railroad infrastructure, and most of our territory can now be reached by rail. Next year we will inaugurate an international trade seaport that will be the biggest in the Caspian region. Azerbaijan is making significant investments in East-West and North-South transportation corridors in order to create the shortest possible routes across the country in both directions.

The President returned to the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that last year we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the restoration of our independence. Azerbaijan's successful development has demonstrated once again that only when a country is free and independent and its destiny is in the hands of its people can it achieve success. The greatest happiness of the people of Azerbaijan is that we live in an independent country conducting independent polices — policies based on the national interests of our people.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Granger: Let me begin by expressing the deep condolences and solidarity of the Government and people of Guyana to the victims of yesterday's earthquake in Mexico and those of Hurricane Maria, which virtually destroyed the Commonwealth of Dominica two days ago.

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that under your guidance progress will be made in advancing the international agenda and realizing the theme of this year's Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Guyana also appreciates the sterling performance of your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, in his stewardship of the Assembly during the past year. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his appointment last year and to wish him a successful tenure.

Today, I am speaking of people, peace and the planet. Nothing is more important in this general debate than ensuring that all representatives here respect its theme, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". First, the theme enjoins us to focus on people — people of all countries and in all circumstances. It is about the human condition of people in States that are large and small, rich and poor, strong and weak. It is about humankind's condition everywhere on Earth.

The world is facing several serious humanitarian crises. In too many parts of the world, children still die from preventable diseases or go to bed hungry. In some places, women are denied equal opportunities for enjoying a good life. The gap between the world's rich and poor remains unacceptably wide. Conflicts within States have spawned international refugee crises, resulting in the displacement of millions from their homelands.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent our collective desire and determination to eradicate hunger and poverty from our planet while promoting equal opportunities in education, employment and social justice for both men and women. The adoption of the SDGs has catalysed our aspirations for a better world into concrete and forward-looking actions and objectives. The Goals seek to promote respect for people's inherent dignity and their rights as human beings. However, their advancement is being obstructed by human rights violations, by people's involuntary migration from their homelands and by terrorism and warfare. The challenge for the United Nations is resolving to reinforce respect for the rights of citizens within the governance structures of our Member States.

Secondly, I am speaking of planet Earth. A sustainable planet is humankind's ultimate patrimony. Nothing is more vital to people's survival. We have been indifferent too long to the need to protect the planet, and now its sustainability is threatened on many fronts. Climate change is not a fiction or the invention of a few extremists. This year, the small island States of the Caribbean and parts of North America have felt the devastating fury of a series of hurricanes — Harvey, Irma, José, Katia, Lee and Maria, to whose frequency and ferocity humankind has contributed through the reckless exploitation of Earth's resources.

Hurricane Irma was a deadly, destructive portent of the extreme vulnerability and fragility of the small island developing States and low-lying coastal States of the Caribbean, and Guyana is playing its part, within the limits of its resources, to provide relief to the affected populations of our sister Caribbean States. Guyana signed and celebrated the Paris Agreement on Climate Change last year in this very Hall. We renew our commitment to its goals this year in a demonstration of Guyana's pioneering role in global environmental stewardship. It must be remembered that in 1989 — three years before the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio in 1992 — Guyana had the foresight to enter into an environmental covenant with the international community by dedicating 360,000 hectares of its rainforests,

> "to develop, demonstrate and make available to Guyana and the international community systems, methods and techniques for the sustainable

utilization of the multiple resources of the tropical forest and the conservation of biological diversity".

Twenty years after that international initiative, Guyana entered into an agreement with the Kingdom of Norway,

"to work together to provide the world with a relevant, replicable model of how Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, known as the REDD-plus programme, plus conservation and sustainable forest management, can align the development objectives of the forest countries with the need to combat climate change".

Guyana is part of the Guiana Shield, one of the world's last remaining blocks of pristine rainforest. The Guiana Shield is the source of 15 per cent of the world's freshwater reserves. Its biodiversity provides ecosystem services, such as food, fresh water and medicinal products. It provides environmental services, such as the regulation of the water cycle, water quality and pollination. The Shield's forests capture and store carbon, mitigating the greenhouse effect. In other words, the Shield is essential to life on Earth. Guyana calls on the United Nations to help protect and preserve the Guiana Shield as a global resource for the survival and sustainability of our planet.

I will now speak of peace. Striving for peace has been the principal purpose and preoccupation of this Organization throughout its existence. A good life for the world's peoples and sustainable use of the planet's resources are predicated on peace with justice, including justice within and between States. The world is weary of war. Striving for peace must be humankind's ceaseless quest. The United Nations is the paramount global instrument of peace. It has a vital role to play in ensuring respect for international law through the International Court of Justice and the Security Council. In striving for peace, we must aim to resolve long-standing inter-State conflicts. In that regard, Guyana supports the call for reform of the Security Council, in order to give an even greater voice to developing countries.

We reiterate our support for a two-State solution to the Palestine-Israeli conflict. We affirm the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland and a dignified existence. We demand the withdrawal of the injurious economic embargo on the Caribbean island of Cuba, which frustrates its right to development.

Striving for peace and the right to development have been Guyana's most serious concerns since national independence in 1966. When I addressed the Assembly last September (see A/71/PV.8), I explained the danger that we have been facing on our borders as a consequence of the territorial claims of our neighbour to the West, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I outlined to the world's nations the peril that Guyana was enduring on its borders at the hands of Venezuela. Venezuela's claim to Guyana's territory, however, has not diminished or been diverted. Guyana remains imperilled. Disturbing developments in Venezuela have attracted the world's attention and roused the concerns of many of us about the privations of its people.

The Caribbean people want the Caribbean to be a zone of peace. Venezuela's claim on Guyana's territorial integrity, however, would be a threat to that zone and that peace. Venezuela is more than four times the size of Guyana, and yet it claims two-thirds of Guyana's territory, including its maritime space. We depend on our territorial and maritime resources for our country's development and for propelling our people out of poverty. After 51 years of Guyana's independence, the Venezuelan claim persists. An eminent international tribunal provided a full, perfect and final settlement of the issue 118 years ago, in 1899. Venezuela repudiated that arbitral award in 1962 in the Special Committee on Decolonization, as British Guiana — as we were then — strove to achieve its independence.

This is a warning to the world, through the Assembly, that peace will be jeopardized in our region if justice does not prevail, not only within Venezuela, but also with regard to its border controversy with Guyana. Four Secretaries-General have been seized of the Venezuelans' claim. The choice has become one between a just and peaceful settlement in accordance with international law, and a Venezuelan posture of attrition that is increasingly blustering and militaristic. In this matter, protraction is the enemy of resolution and the ally of sustained conflict.

Fortunately, as they indicated publicly, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and current Secretary-General António Guterres have both decided that if, based on the 1966 Geneva Agreement, significant progress has not been made by the end of 2017 towards arriving at a full agreement on a settlement of the controversy, the International Court of Justice will be the next means of peaceful settlement, unless Guyana and Venezuela jointly request otherwise. Guyana has

been working assiduously with the Secretary-General's personal representative and looks to the international community to ensure that Venezuela is not allowed to thwart the process of judicial settlement, which is the clear and agreed path to peace and justice.

The people of the world yearn to fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment — an attainable objective of the Sustainable Development Goals endorsed by the United Nations. Peace for the world's peoples is the mandate of the United Nations. Peace can be achieved by addressing the world's humanitarian crises, promoting justice within and between nations and resolving long-standing conflicts between States.

Planet Earth can provide a good life for all. The planet can be protected from the ravages of climate change and reckless damage to its ecology and biodiversity. United, the nations gathered in this Hall can fulfil the promise of the Charter of the United Nations and the theme of the General Assembly to focus on people, strive for peace and protect the planet.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. David Arthur Granger, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Dragan Čović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Dragan Čović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Dragan Čović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Čović (*spoke in Bosnian; English text provided by the delegation*): I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the task you have just embarked on in leading the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am convinced that your tact and diplomacy, which we in Bosnia and Herzegovina have witnessed first-hand, will help the most important body of the United Nations make new progress and effectively face new challenges. My gratitude also goes to the outgoing President for the leadership he showed during the seventy-first session.

I would also like to join others in congratulating His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as Secretary-General of the United Nations. His noble and wise intention to devote more attention to building bridges to connect us all in the years ahead will certainly have all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's support.

In a world dominated by uncertainty and insecurity, it is simply not possible to overstate the importance of the principles and the multilateral framework defined for us by the founders of the United Nations. The strength of the Organization lies in both our individual and shared strengths in our efforts to eradicate diseases, hunger, terrorism and every other threat to human existence. In doing so, of course, we must admit to ourselves how necessary and important it is to use thoughtful and constructive measures to bring the United Nations system closer to its surroundings and enable it to adapt so that it can anticipate the challenges its environment presents and respond to them with a force that is far stronger than the simple sum of our individual abilities.

We continue to witness and to be deeply concerned about the ongoing suffering of the Syrian people. Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly condemns every form of violence against Syria's civilian population. The violence must stop. The dignity of every Syrian woman, man and child, and of every Syrian refugee, must be restored. Their belief in the possibility of recovery and opportunities for a new life must also be restored. We and many other delegations in this Hall today will continue to call for a peaceful and political solution to the conflict through negotiations. That process must be owned by the Syrian people alone, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), and with the assistance of the international community and the United Nations, led by the Special Envoy for Syria, whose selfless efforts to continue the negotiations in Geneva are highly appreciated.

It seems superfluous to repeat that there can be no peace and prosperity for the Israeli people if the same is not provided for the Palestinians, and vice versa. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents the most serious

unresolved problem in the Middle East, and the current absence of any negotiations between the parties is disturbing. Both nations deserve better. Again — and this has been the case for decades — the journey towards peace has been too slow and has become more and more complex. It is therefore essential that we steadfastly recall the ultimate goal, which is the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living peacefully side by side, in safety and within recognized borders. Bosnia and Herzegovina still believes that this goal can be achieved if both parties can fulfil their obligations as set forth in the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Evil has existed throughout human history. Sometimes it is on the margins of our communities. Sometimes, to a greater or lesser degree, it is inside them. It does not always take the same form or manifest itself with the same intensity. Terrorism is undoubtedly the greatest evil of our times, and its form and strength represent the greatest threat we have to international peace and security. Destructive forces have always had deep roots and many different faces, but there can be no justification for their existence. We need united, concentrated efforts, along with a multidimensional and integrated approach, to overcome terrorism and permanently eliminate the fear of terror from our communities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to contribute to the full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the activities of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. We particularly welcome the efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres in strengthening the counter-terrorism capacities of the United Nations and, in that regard, the establishment of the new Office of Counter-Terrorism. For our part, we are ready to constantly strengthen cooperation at the regional, subregional and international levels, especially in the areas of information collection and exchange. As a member of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, we will continue to support the Coalition's efforts to liberate entire communities and help them recover from the suffering and harm imposed by Da'esh and its global network.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to the full implementation of all Security Council resolutions aimed at bringing persons involved in financing, planning, preparing or executing terrorist acts to justice. Furthermore, we fully share the view that for the long-term eradication of the evil of terrorism and violent extremism, it is necessary to continuously invest in efforts along the entire spectrum of interconnected areas, from the eradication of injustice, inequality, poverty and a lack of freedom to improving understanding among those who differ, and to strengthen intercultural dialogue and generally accepted democratic values. Once we start thinking that we have done enough in all those areas, we need to start again and redouble our efforts.

A world without the threat of the total destruction of humankind is less utopian if there are fewer means and arms for destruction. Disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are therefore still prerequisites for the global peace and security that we all strive for. In that context, Bosnia and Herzegovina joins the strong condemnation of the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We also call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply without delay, fully and unconditionally, with its obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions.

My faith in the value of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is as strong today as it was two years ago, when we adopted it. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it has received due institutional attention, based on its significance and the nobility of the goals it sets for us. The roles have been defined, the goals are clear and coordination has been established.

For us, as well as for other developing countries burdened by the discrepancies between wishes and possibilities, strong political will and decisive practical steps in the right direction will not always be enough. Fulfilling the noble and ambitious Sustainable Development Goals requires knowledge and norms that many Member States do not have. It might produce an additional burden on the already overburdened State budgets. Assistance in formulating strategies and policies, transferring technologies, providing financial resources and measuring progress is therefore indisputably crucial, along with, of course, countries' full ownership of the implementation processes. In that connection, we have fully understood and accepted the strong interconnectedness of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. We have ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and have chosen to follow its guidelines. It is a debt to our children and to the planet that has to be unconditionally fulfilled.

Whether in our past, present or future, women in my country hold high positions that rightfully and naturally belong to them. The role of women is vital to the development and prosperity of the family as well as of society as a whole. In post-conflict environments, women are always the first to extend the hand of reconciliation. In times of great challenges and risks, we need the strength and natural ability of women more than ever in order to pursue peaceful solutions.

Although we are extremely proud of the significant progress we have made in implementing the provisions of the historic Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, we are also aware of the areas where it is possible and necessary to do considerably more. We will certainly continue to invest in additional efforts to strengthen and empower Bosnian women and girls in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Another social group that deserves special attention is young people, who are a constant source of change and an incubator of inventive solutions to the problems we inherit from the past. When healthy, educated, and employed, they are the engine that drives our societies forward. Environments in which young people have limited access to education, economic development and decision-making processes are subject to frustration, social unrest and instability. For that reason, a significant part of the reform processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina is dedicated to creating conditions for reducing youth unemployment, corresponding to targets 8.5 and 8.6 of Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda.

Unfortunately, in Bosnia and Herzegovina we know all too much about the high price of war. For us, preventive diplomacy is a tool that, when used at the right time, can help ensure that wars are never repeated anywhere. There are many reasons why, on a global level, the United Nations system must be at the heart of all activities that use preventive measures in order to resolve crises and prevent people from being displaced from their homes.

Again, much of the responsibility for prevention lies at other levels. Within our communities, we must counter all symptoms of trouble and conflicts. We must correct social injustice, reconcile what seems irreconcilable, persevere in compromise, strive for pluralistic and inclusive solutions, give equal weight to our own rights and those of others and constantly seek ways to find a common language. I believe that prevention and mediation, as well as conflict management techniques and conflict resolution in divided societies, should be applied first within the region at issue, with regional actors who generally better understand the opposing sides, their reasoning and their different views of the problem.

We are proud of our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Cyprus, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali. We consider that to be the most direct contribution of Bosnia and Herzegovina to building world peace. We also see our involvement in United Nations missions as a way to do things that are possible today but that not long ago were almost impossible to even imagine, and so to help people in areas affected by conflicts.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has learned lessons from its difficult past, and for the future it has chosen to follow the principles set by the founders of the European Union 60 years ago. We have adopted the European path, and, choosing between cooperation and confrontation, we chose and will always choose cooperation in the search for common compromises.

On our own, but also with the unselfish help of our European friends, we do everything we can to find as many opportunities for open dialogue as possible, and we use each of those opportunities to build even more trust and mutually beneficial connections for our people, who, despite difficulties and complicated times, have more common links and interests than we, their leaders, are sometimes willing to recognize. Reconciliation, trust, partnership and cooperation among all of us, in contexts both broad and narrow, must become living and long-term principles for a stable and secure future. Commitment to regional initiatives and constructive action through the regional organizations to which we belong are therefore high on the list of our foreign-policy priorities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is now doing everything it can to speed up its progress to where it really belongs, within the framework of a strong European family, whose values it shares. Reform and other processes that we are pursuing for that purpose are not always simple or easy, but we see them as a unique opportunity to accelerate the harmonization of our economic, social and institutional development with what awaits us tomorrow in the European Union. We will therefore continue to fulfil the obligations we have undertaken in

order to reach the status of candidate by the beginning of 2018 with true commitment, which will be a powerful and much needed boost to internal consolidation and the further acceleration of integration processes.

However, it is with concern that I wish to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that my country is going through a period of important challenges. I am deeply convinced that one people in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be happy and prosperous if the other two are not, and indeed if all other people living in our country are not. In that regard, I believe that it is up to us in Bosnia and Herzegovina to make a crucial step to adopt changes to our electoral legislation by the end of this year, in accordance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As in the past, we expect understanding and support of the international community in solving the issue, because it is of vital importance for further democratizing and achieving our full integration into the European Union.

Allow me to conclude with a reminder that all of our needs — economic, social, security, political and cultural — can be very diverse, as are our possibilities for achieving them. The choices we make every day to ensure prosperity for our people also vary from one Member State to another. I am convinced that the future of humankind will largely depend on our ability to turn our differences into advantages. We expect the United Nations system to guide us in that and to assist us, above all, in building a system based on unity in diversity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Dragan Čović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Varela Rodríguez (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin my remarks by extending my condolences and solidarity to the people and the Government of Mexico for the victims of the earthquake that struck yesterday, as well as to the peoples of Cuba, the United States and the nations of the Caribbean for the deaths and heavy material damage left in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey and now being inflicted by Hurricane Maria, especially in Dominica. Our prayers are with the victims and their families. Such natural disasters send a clear message that we must continue to forge ties of solidarity and that our countries' protective and security capacities should be used solely to help each other, not to create conflict.

I would like to congratulate you, President Lajčák, on your election to steer the debates at this session of the General Assembly, and to extend warm greetings to Secretary-General António Guterres. In my capacity as President of the Republic of Panama, I pledge the support of my Government and country. From this rostrum, with respect and affection, I would also like to send my warmest greetings to the people of Panama, who have given me the opportunity to serve them.

For a fourth consecutive year, I am returning to the Assembly as the world is beset by challenges such as organized crime, terrorism and natural disasters that affect all our populations. Another major challenge we must tackle is the increase in migration flows driven by war, poverty and inequality. Against that backdrop, the theme of the Assembly at this session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — will encourage Heads of State and Government to engage in dialogue and reach agreement on concrete actions that we can take to bring about peace in the world.

Peace is a human construct, the fruit of coexisting respectfully and meeting the basic needs of individuals, responsibly, all the while preserving the planet thatis our home. The most effective and appropriate way to resolve the problems that currently affect the Earth's inhabitants is to ensure that human beings are always central to our decision-making. Such humanitarian policy has been the lodestar of my leadership of Panama for the past 39 months, as I have sought to build a nation where justice and equality prevail, without

making innocent people pay the price or causing unnecessary conflict.

Democracy is not just about electing Heads of State in free and fair elections. Rather, it is about those of us who are elected understanding that the power bestowed on us should be used only to serve those who elected us; about managing the wealth of the State with transparency, fairness and social justice for the benefit of the people; and about leading our countries peacefully, on a basis of dialogue and consensus. In 2015, in his opening remarks to the seventh Summit of the Americas, Pope Francis said,

> "Panama's geographic position in the centre of the American continent, making it the meeting point between North and South, between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, is surely a call, *pro mundi beneficio*, to generate a new order of peace and justice and to promote solidarity and cooperation while respecting the just autonomy of each nation."

I have always borne in mind Panama's role as a facilitator of dialogue and understanding. Ours is a country of unity at the service of the international community. We stand ready to cooperate as a strategic ally and to contribute our resources in the interest of addressing the common problems afflicting the region and the world at large.

At the Summit of the Americas, which took place in Panama, there was a historic rapprochement between two countries that had held divergent positions for more than half a century — Cuba and the United States. They began a frank conversation about putting an end to their estrangement. As we near the next Summit of the Americas, in Lima, we must approach it with a constructive spirit and an openness to dialogue to analyse the problems of the region and uphold peace and unity across the Americas.

The Americas and the world are happy to see that Colombia is successfully continuing to implement its Peace Agreement. In his recent visit, Pope Francis delivered an important message about the consolidation of the process — which benefits everyone, not just the Colombian people — that we must accept the mistakes that have been made, correct them and seek reconciliation.

However, our continent is facing a problem that transcends borders — the growth of drug production and trafficking. It is vital that the leaders of the Americas unite in joining forces to tackle that challenge, one that threatens the peace of our peoples, particularly in the northern triangle. We cannot allow drug trafficking to disrupt the peace that has been restored at such cost in Central America and Colombia. Drug trafficking condemns our people to poverty; affects State budgets; makes us invest resources in security instead of education, health, housing and transportation; challenges the authority of Governments; and subverts the loyalty of those whose duty it is to comply with and uphold the rule of law.

Panama reaffirms its commitment to combating drug trafficking head-on. We will dedicate the full force of our efforts and resources to helping the region to eliminate that scourge. Moreover, we appeal to the leaders and Heads of State of the countries that produce and consume drugs to support us in this fight. Every dollar generated by drug trafficking represents death in our region.

The political crisis in Venezuela is having a profound impact on the region. We must stop the clashes that have provoked unnecessary violence, hurting all Latin Americans. It is urgent that we recognize that to resolve the conflict, both sides must seek a path to understanding and agree on a defined road map for free and transparent presidential elections in 2018. It would be a grave error if the Government of Venezuela insisted on installing a one-party political model by force. That would aggravate its social and humanitarian crisis, increasing migratory flows that could result in complex situations in neighbouring countries. We should all stand with the Venezuelan people to help them overcome this crisis.

Our continent must emerge united from the Summit of the Americas in Lima if we are to combat inequality and drug trafficking together. In that regard, Panama is willing to play a front-line role, building bridges of understanding and dialogue that can make our region stronger and more united. I call on the Heads of State of the Americas to go to Lima with that vision of unity so that we can ensure that the hemisphere makes steady progress towards development.

We live in a world that is being battered by acts of terrorism, natural disasters and organized crime. There is no time or space for us to waste effort fighting over temporary ideological differences. Countries must unite their capacities to address the evils affecting peoples beyond their borders. Panama strongly condemns all

acts of terrorism anywhere the world, which can never be justified.

Today I respectfully call on the countries that are members of the Security Council to strengthen their measures and decisions promoting sustainable peace in places such as Syria and Iraq. I must also strongly condemn irresponsible leaders, such as those in North Korea, who seek to destabilize peaceful coexistence in the world.

Panama believes that a strong multilateral system can be used to achieve the objectives we set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we are ready to continue playing a leadership role. That is why we support the Secretary-General's process of reform designed to make the United Nations more transparent, efficient and better able to respond to the needs of a world of more than 7 billion people. If we can share the wealth of our planet, no one will be left behind.

Those reforms must ensure that the United Nations unites us more effectively and connects Heads of State with the pain of people suffering from war, natural disasters and organized crime. Multilateral cooperation is vital to that process, which is not a question merely of economic resources but also of the transfer of capacity and best practices. Middle-income countries such as Panama can contribute to the transfer of knowledge and technology, generating tangible benefits for populations and contributing to peace.

Panama's commitment to that path is unwavering. We therefore call for the establishment of a United Nations regional headquarters in our country. We are willing to build facilities for a centre for regional humanitarian assistance that will enable us to provide timely support, when it is needed, to countries in the region that are dealing with natural disasters, as we did recently with the air and maritime bridges bringing aid to countries affected by Hurricane Irma, which struck Cuba, the Caribbean and the United States.

As President of the Republic of Panama, I have two clear goals: to make politics a service and ensure that my country continues as a functional democracy. We are recovering hundreds of millions of misappropriated dollars that belong to the people, and we are investing that money in the people, using the State's resources to benefit all Panamanians. Thanks to the honest Government that I lead, the increased revenues from our broadened Canal and the sustained economic growth of the past few years, we are improving the living conditions of all Panamanians.

We have significantly increased the salaries of civil servants, police officers, educators, doctors and nurses. We have reviewed the money going into pensions and scholarships and strengthened conditional monetary assistance. We are also laying thousands of kilometres of roads, investing in major basic health projects and water-purifying plants, and building tens of thousands of houses for our poorest citizens, as well as modern, bilingual schools, sports and cultural centres, new metro lines and a modern mass-transport system.

We are working towards those objectives with a sense of responsibility and transparency, without increasing any taxes, and moving forward steadily towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals. That is the value of an honest Government, which, bound by social justice and equality to distribute the riches of the people, represents a road to a peaceful society, a decent quality of life and a fairer world in which we are all treated equally.

All human beings deserve a decent life, which takes everyone's efforts to build and is achieved only when the basic needs of our citizens for food, shelter, health and education are met. That is why it is important to ensure that every citizen pays taxes to the State, as the working and professional classes do. It is Governments' duty to take action against tax evasion, which affects the ability of the State to help the poorest and deepens inequality. Rulers must implement public policies and develop programmes that allow the State to distribute resources equitably, so that the most vulnerable are equipped with the tools to contribute to development and use resources sustainably.

Countries have to be accountable in the interests of achieving transparency in the administration of State resources. However, it is important to ensure that the misdeeds of the political classes and their supporters in business do not hurt innocent people. The fight against corruption is not measured by the numbers of those who are prosecuted and convicted by the judicial system, but rather by the numbers of those who benefit from a transparent administration of State resources, so that they are recovered for the State's use. That is important. Rulers have to defend their countries' economies and the jobs and projects that benefit the people.

Panama is committed to the security and protection of its logistics platforms and financial systems. We

continue to work responsibly to prevent illegal activities that undermine the common good. In a world that is constantly talking about justice, we Heads of State and Government must keep in mind that justice means giving all of us what is rightfully ours. Our planet is rich enough for all human beings to have a decent life. The most important value for the inhabitants of the Earth is peace. It is our responsibility to ensure that our actions are always aligned with the pursuit of that goal. May God bless us all and guide us in our work towards a better world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: Every year, the United Nations channels billions of dollars in humanitarian assistance. It also sets the global agenda on key policy issues from development to women's rights, while providing a platform for major international agreements. Those are signs of an Organization that is both relevant and, in many cases, effective. And yet there is a sense that the United Nations is not meeting our needs and expectations. In that context, I would like to commend the Secretary-General, and to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, on the two important initiatives that the Secretary-General championed this week — his initiative on United Nations reform and his response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Those steps go to the heart of the matter, which is the deficit of trust and accountability in the international system. To be truly effective in delivering a decent life for all, the United Nations must treat all the people it serves with impartiality and respect, and it must be a good steward of the funds entrusted to it. Abuse and waste are therefore not a mere public-relations problem but an existential challenge that must be tackled head-on.

The Secretary-General deserves our full support in his efforts to make the United Nations not only effective but transformational. We have the tools and the mandates to address the global challenges of our day, from climate change to peacebuilding to human equality and development. Where we fall short is in getting things done.

Institutional reform is not a one-off event like applying a fresh coat of paint. The essence of reform is a mindset of constantly striving to improve performance and delivery and holding ourselves responsible for shortcomings and results. In that sense, the reform spirit that has started to take root in both the United Nations and the African Union is encouraging, and Rwanda is happy to be associated with both. This positive momentum is also positioning the United Nations and the African Union to work more closely together.

Concrete steps can be taken on both sides to improve the quality of coordination and consultation. The African Union and the United Nations are already good partners in peacekeeping, and Rwanda is happy and proud to have forces serving under both flags. But we can do much more and do it better.

Mr. Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We also share the common objective of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa's Agenda 2063 targets, and of continuing to enhance women's empowerment. Closer collaboration will help us bridge the growing digital divide through universal broadband access, which can connect our people to networks of knowledge and prosperity.

Canada and Rwanda, together with other stakeholders, are working to raise awareness of the tremendous impact we can have right away by ratifying and implementing the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol. This is among the most important actions that a country can take in directly tackling climate change and reaffirming its commitment to the Paris Agreement. Fewer than 15 additional ratifications

are needed in order for the Kigali Amendment to come into force in 2019.

Our world is facing difficult challenges, but no more than in the past. Working together in a constructive spirit, we can ensure for our children the future they deserve.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Cartes Jara (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Paraguayan people and the Government of Paraguay, I hope that under the presidency of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák the General Assembly will have great success in fulfilling the purposes of the United Nations.

On behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Paraguay, I wish to express to the people and the Government of Mexico our solidarity with the victims of yesterday's earthquake, whose epicentre was in Morelos state, and to extend our sincerest condolences to the families of the victims of the tragedy.

After four years as Head of the Government of the Republic of Paraguay, I have the honour of participating in the General Assembly with strengthened resolve to contribute to building a world order governed by the principles of justice, peace and solidarity among nations and within an effective framework of human rights, State institutions and the rule of law. We must persist in our efforts to strike a reasonable balance between the interests of all States and to build a democratic and equitable world order, while developing relations among sovereign, independent States based on respect and trust and prioritizing the peaceful coexistence whereby all nations can enjoy the same opportunities.

To that end, we need the bodies of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly and the Security Council, to work efficiently. We seek a more democratic, transparent, inclusive and representative Security Council that reflects the diversity of the States Members of the United Nations and the geopolitical realities of today's world.

The Organization continues to be the most important universal forum for tackling global challenges. Problems such as poverty and inequality, climate change, transnational organized crime, drug trafficking — which undermines democratic institutions — and terrorism, among others, must be dealt with collectively. We urge all stakeholders to focus their efforts and resources on responding to these shared and pressing challenges faced by humankind.

The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its firm commitment to implementing the provisions of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and encourages other States, particularly those that are most responsible for producing greenhouse gases, to take all necessary measures to save our planet from the consequences of global warming. In Paraguay, our vision of social responsibility is behind our efforts to increase our production of clean and renewable energy. We have two impressive hydraoelectric dams — Itaipu, which we share with Brazil, and Yacyreta, shared with Argentina. This year, Itaipu Binacional was incorporated into the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves, as was the Alto Paraná Atlantic forest.

My mandate as President of my country comes to an end in August 2018. This is my final address to the United Nations, and I would like to mention several improvements that we have made since I took office in 2013.

Today Paraguay is a full representative democracy with a true separation of powers, solid electoral processes and a fully effective rule of law. We have given clear signals to the international community, both publicly and privately, on our country's improved potential as an investment vehicle, in the area of cooperation and with regard to treaties.

Where foreign relations and Paraguay's role in the world are concerned, our interactions have grown exponentially through visits and invitations received as well as participation in international organizations. Over the past four years, our country has had official visits from His Holiness Pope Francis, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Rus', as well as other top officials from multilateral organizations and various Heads of State and international eminent persons who have honoured us with their presence.

Paraguay was unanimously admitted to the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). For us, our membership of that highly prestigious global organization is an unequivocal sign of international recognition of our Government's efforts and achievements through our policies of good practices and institutional robustness. We can proudly say that Paraguay is a member of that select OECD group in an affirmation of the international community's confidence in the significant reforms undertaken by our Government.

Today we are members of the World Intellectual Property Organization Advisory Committee on Enforcement, following years of mistrust of our country regarding respect for intellectual property rights. We have decided to take on additional memberships in international bodies in order to be part of discussions and decision-making, with a view to continually expanding our global presence. The role of Paraguay in the world today transcends borders and continents.

Our priorities within the framework of the United Nations have been established in the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We therefore urge States, especially our trading partners and transit countries, to duly take those into account.

Regional integration has undeniable benefits, especially when we work to achieve it while endeavouring to reconcile the interests of all stakeholders. We are therefore working in the Southern Common Market to revitalize economic and commercial integration while also making progress on the social, employment, scientific and cultural aspects of the bloc, which represents a very positive agenda.

The 2030 Agenda for Sutainable Development is the most ambitious intergovernmental development project in the multilateral sphere. In order to properly implement our national development plan through 2030, we are building an innovative, participatory institutional architecture that is committed to the Agenda's Goals and targets. I am proud to say that, together with the Presidents of our Congress and Supreme Court of Justice, I have publicly signed a joint cross-branch declaration that recognizes Paraguay's absolute commitment to the terms of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals and targets. Paraguay has thus declared itself in favour of the 2030 Agenda through its three State branches, an event previously unheard of in our region.

During these past four years, the Administration I lead has responded justly and effectively to the needs of all sectors of society. When we first came to power, in August 2013, we established three main national policies — poverty reduction through social development; inclusive economic growth; and the expansion of Paraguay's role in the world. As we implemented those policies, we transformed a culture previously marred by political cronyism and bad practices into a model based on transparency and compliance, where public access to information is guaranteed and more opportunities are offered to our people. Access to public information has led to unprecedented progress, and today we have instruments ensuring that public business is conducted in public.

We are undergoing an unprecedented transformation, and although it has triggered some concerns, reactions and resistance from those who were more comfortable with the former model, I can guarantee that it is closing the door on such evils as corruption, which delayed Paraguay's economic and social development for many years. Despite regional economic problems, we have been able to achieve sustained economic growth, and we hope to continue improving our ability to forge relationships throughout the world by being trustworthy and predictable. Paraguay's economic growth in recent years has been constant, and at an annual average of 5.2 per cent is one of the highest in South America.

While we are also working to reduce the poverty rate, years of neglect in the past have made eradicating poverty altogether a major challenge. Our priorities have been focused on giving a strong impetus to social investment, particularly in education, so that people living in poverty can benefit from economic growth

and to help reduce inequality. We are implementing flagship social-protection programmes such as the Tekoporã conditional cash-transfer programme, a school meal programme, food allowances for elderly adults living in poverty and the Sowing Opportunities poverty-reduction programme. In addition, we are increasing our grants of scholarships and financial aid to young people living in poverty, in the firm belief that education and professional training for young people represent the best possible investment for the country's future.

After 175 years, the Paraguayan Government is once again granting postgraduate scholarships for study abroad at the world's best universities, with a record investment of $42 million. Thanks to the Carlos Antonio López scholarships, 1,000 Paraguayans from the country's 17 departments and its capital are doing postgraduate studies in 50 of the world's 200 most prestigious universities. Hundreds of them are teachers and 60 per cent are women under 30 years old. The first 60 have successfully completed their studies and are returning to apply their knowledge for our country's benefit and development.

Another of our national strategic goals in combating poverty focuses on housing programmes designed to offer citizens decent homes, revive the economy and create jobs. In the past four years we have worked hard, transparently and responsibly, with unprecedented results. For the first time in Paraguay's history, by the end of its term a single Government will have delivered on its promise of more than 30,000 public housing units, 10 times more than any previous Administration, and even more valuable because they benefit thousands of families that for years were ignored by previous Governments and now have decent homes and access to better conditions in which to thrive. We are building hope and opportunities so that families in Paraguay's humblest communities — whether in poor urban areas, indigenous regions or rural villages — can move forward. We are transforming our country through transparent and efficient efforts that enable us to make the most of our resources while reducing expenses, eliminating corruption in projects and improving construction quality through rigorous controls.

My Government encourages productive development through responsible investment. We give priority to infrastructure projects that improve connectivity, both nationally and with neighbouring countries. In particular, investment in infrastructure is at its highest in decades, and the scope and modernity of our new road construction is outstanding. We demand responsibility and commitment from our leaders and have worked hard to achieve good standards of living for our people. Thanks to this new model for Government efforts, our country is becoming more efficient, progressive and honest.

The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to international peace and security and the use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts, based on mutual cooperation between States. Our Constitution bans weapons of mass destruction, and we therefore welcome the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and reaffirm our belief that the nuclear-disarmament process should be transparent and irreversible, with effective verification mechanisms based on a universal, legally binding framework. We reiterate our condemnation of the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in clear defiance and breach of its international obligations, constituting yet another provocation to the international community. We hope that the General Assembly will firmly reject such irrational behaviour, which threatens security and peace on a global scale.

The Republic of Paraguay is deeply concerned about the scourge of terrorism, which we condemn in any shape or form. The fight against terrorism must be carried out within a framework of unconditional respect for the precepts of international law, through solid cooperation among States. We will continue to collaborate with peacekeeping operations organized under the auspices of the United Nations, in the belief that they can enable us to achieve the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. My country is currently contributing military personnel, both women and men, to six peacekeeping missions, and invests in the training of its contingents at our peacekeeping operations training centre.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the promotion and effective protection of human rights throughout the world. We firmly believe that we should protect the dignity and rights of all people, without discrimination. We urge the Human Rights Council to continue to fulfil its functions with objectivity, impartiality and universality. In this context, I should not omit to mention a worrying issue in my region, which is that the situation in Venezuela needs urgent attention. I would like to reiterate a message of solidarity to the people of Venezuela, victims of political persecution and human

rights violations, in the hope that our brother nation can find a solution to its current democratic breakdown and deep crisis as soon as possible.

Through international cooperation, the Republic of China on Taiwan has long been engaged in cooperation programmes related to the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. It supports many countries, including Paraguay. Taiwan has relevant knowledge and experience and has contributed effectively to the international community. The Government of Paraguay once again urges all Member States to identify appropriate ways to facilitate Taiwan's participation in the mechanisms for meetings and activities of the United Nations system, so that its 23 million inhabitants can exercise their responsibilities normally as global citizens and establish sustainable alliances with every country.

In our view, Secretary-General António Guterres has made an auspicious start at the helm of the United Nations, supported by his vast experience as a statesman. It will be up to the Heads of State of member countries during this session to ensure that it can be a starting point of a new era for the true universalization of the principles guiding the functioning of the Organization, particularly so that its programmes and actions can reduce the enormous inequalities that still exist between countries and regions.

I reaffirm that my country will continue to give high priority to its participation in United Nations debates, in our belief in the importance of the Organization's work in building a more peaceful and just world. For our part, we will continue to work resolutely towards development with true social inclusion, creating conditions for prosperity and always putting people first. I would like to conclude with an exhortation from Pope Francis: "Let us never forget that authentic power is service."

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rouhani (*spoke in Farsi; interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate Secretary-General Guterres on his appointment to his high office and to wish him every success in his crucial responsibilities.

Four months ago, more than 41 million people — 73 per cent of the total of Iran's eligible voters — came to the polls in our country's twelfth presidential election and once again expressed confidence in my platform, which calls for moderation and respect for human rights, prosperity and economic revitalization at home, and for constructive engagement around the world. Their vote illustrated the maturity of the electorate in a society that has been experiencing free and democratic governance for only four decades.

Our latest election was not merely a vote for a President. It represents a huge political investment on the part of our resilient people, who truly constitute our most reliable asset. Human and civil rights, along with a quest for justice and Islamic values, have been at the heart of the principal demands of the Iranian people for their more than 150 years of struggle, particularly during the Islamic revolution of 1979. In its first term, while pursuing nuclear negotiations internationally, at home my Government focused on discussing and articulating our citizens' rights, resulting in the promulgation of a Citizens' Rights Charter and its adoption for implementation, thereby meeting the demands of a people who, in their desire to restore their rights and human dignity, first rose up against a dictatorial regime 111 years ago, in their constitutional revolution, and again 39 years ago, in the Islamic revolution.

I declare here in this Hall that moderation is the preferred and chosen path of the great Iranian people. Moderation seeks neither isolation nor hegemony. It implies neither indifference nor intransigence. The path of moderation is the path of peace. That peace is a just and inclusive peace, not one that means peace for one nation and war and turmoil for others. Moderation is freedom and democracy, conducted in an inclusive and comprehensive manner that does not purport to promote freedom in one place while supporting dictators elsewhere. Moderation is the synergy of ideas, not a dance of swords. And lastly, the path of moderation nurtures beauty. Exports of deadly weapons are not beautiful. Peace is beautiful. In Iran, we strive to build peace and promote the human rights of peoples and nations. We never condone tyranny and we always defend those whose voices are not heard. But while we never threaten anyone, neither do we tolerate threats from anyone. Our discourse is based on dignity and respect, and we are unmoved by threats and intimidation. We believe in dialogue and negotiation conducted on an equal footing and based on mutual respect.

In today's globalized world, peace, security, stability and the progress of all nations are intertwined. We cannot see a rogue and racist regime trample on the most basic rights of Palestinians while the usurpers of their land enjoy security. No one can aspire to long-term stability, prosperity and development while Muslims in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Afghanistan, Myanmar and so many other places live in misery, war and poverty.

Throughout its history, Iran has been a bastion of tolerance for many religions and ethnicities. We are the same people who rescued the Jews from Babylonian servitude, opened our arms to welcome Armenian Christians in our midst and created the Iranian cultural continent with a unique mix of diverse religions and ethnicities. I represent the same Iran that has historically assisted the oppressed. Centuries ago, we supported the rights of the Jewish people and today we are insisting on the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people. Iran is still the same country, supporting justice and seeking tranquillity.

Today we are on the front lines fighting terror and religious extremism in the Middle East, not for sectarian or ethnic reasons but for ethical, humanitarian and strategic ones. Iran does not seek to restore its ancient empire, impose its official religion on others or export its revolution through the force of arms. We have enough confidence in the depth of our culture, the truth of our faith and the tenacity and longevity of our revolution that we will never seek to export any of them in the way that neocolonialists do through the heavy boots of soldiers. To promote our culture, civilization, religion and revolution, we enter hearts and engage minds. We recite our poetry and engage in discourse on our philosophy. Our ambassadors are our poets, mystics and philosophers. We have reached these shores of the Atlantic through Rumi and spread our influence all over Asia with Saadi. We have already captured the world through Hafez, so we are not in need of new conquests.

The call for moderation is from a nation that has been committed to it. We do not preach moderation; we practice it, and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a case in point. The deal is the outcome of two years of intensive multilateral negotiations, overwhelmingly applauded by the international community and endorsed by the Security Council through resolution 2231 (2015). As such, it belongs to the entire international community, not just one or two countries. The JCPOA can become a new model for global interaction based on mutual constructive engagement among us all. We have opened our doors to engagement and cooperation and concluded scores of development agreements with advanced countries in both the East and the West.

Unfortunately, there are some who have deprived themselves of that unique opportunity, in a way that amounts to imposing sanctions on themselves, and now they feel betrayed. We were not deceived, and neither did we cheat or deceive anyone else. We determined the extent of our nuclear programme ourselves. We never sought to achieve deterrence through nuclear weapons. We have immunized ourselves through our people's knowledge and, more importantly, their resilience. That is our talent and our approach. Some say that they wanted to deprive Iran of nuclear weapons, but we have always vociferously rejected such weapons. We have never been distressed about forgoing an option that we never actually sought. It is reprehensible that a rogue Zionist regime that threatens regional and global security with its nuclear arsenal and is not committed to any international instrument or safeguard has the audacity to preach to peaceful nations.

Imagine how the Middle East would look if the JCPOA had not been concluded. Imagine that along with

civil wars, takfiri terror, humanitarian nightmares and complex sociopolitical crises in West Asia there was a manufactured nuclear crisis. How would we all fare? I declare here to the Assembly that while the Islamic Republic of Iran will not be the first country to violate the agreement, it will respond decisively and resolutely to any violation of it by any party. It would be a great pity if it were to be destroyed by rogue newcomers to the world of politics, and the world would have lost a great opportunity. But such unfortunate behaviour will never halt Iran in its course of progress and advancement. By violating its international commitments, the new United States Administration only destroys its own credibility and undermines international confidence in negotiating with it or accepting its promises.

Four years ago in the Assembly, the Islamic Republic of Iran sponsored the initiative of resolution 68/127, “A world against violence and violent extremism”. We consider dialogue and negotiations based on a positive-sum paradigm to be the only path to resolving global and regional crises. We have made a conscious decision to strengthen relations with our neighbours and others in the region, as well as to enhance our cooperation with all friendly countries. We cannot navigate the complex and dangerous challenges in this turbulent transitional global phase without expanding interaction and exchanges and institutionalizing dialogue between nations and States. The ignorant, absurd and hateful rhetoric filled with ridiculously baseless allegations that we heard yesterday in this Hall was not only unfit to be heard at the United Nations — which was established to promote peace and respect between nations — but in fact contradicted the demands of the nations of this global Organization that it bring Governments together in the battle against war and terror.

I wish to emphasize that the defence capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including its missiles, are solely defensive deterrents for maintaining regional peace and stability and suppressing the adventurist tendencies of irrational aspirants. We cannot forget that civilians in many of our cities became the target of long-range missile attacks by Saddam Hussein during his eight-year war of aggression against us. We will never allow our people to become victims of such catastrophic delusions again. Instability and extremist violence have only been exacerbated in our region through the military interventions of extra-regional actors — the same Powers that try to sell ever more of their deadly weapons to other States by accusing Iran of fomenting instability. I want to emphasize that foreign intervention and the imposition of alien wishes on the people of the region can only widen and deepen the crises in our region. The crises in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain do not have military solutions and can be resolved only through an end to the hostilities and acceptance of the will and desires of their peoples. The United States Government should explain to its own people why, after spending billions of dollars of the assets of the people of America and our region, it has brought the region only war, misery, poverty and the rise of terrorism and extremism rather than contributing to peace and stability.

In the past four years, Iran has demonstrated that its economy has unparalleled potential for expansion and growth. Economic sanctions not only have not hindered it, they have solidified the popular resolve to enhance domestic production. Iran’s achievement of the highest global growth rate last year proved that its economy has the potential to become the world’s most vibrant emerging economy within the next 20 years, with a trillion-dollar growth potential. Our strategic choice for achieving such sustainable and balanced growth is an extensive network of global partnerships. We firmly believe that development and security can grow only if they grow together, and that common interests can bind us regionally and globally to guarantee both regional and global security.

Iran, with the world’s largest gas and oil reserves, is prepared to engage in long-term cooperation to advance global energy security. We are eager to expand international transit corridors through joint ventures in sea, rail and road infrastructure projects. Our achievements in enhancing economic infrastructures through a nation-wide gas pipeline, a national electricity grid and rail and road transport have made it possible for various industries to produce their goods at a lower cost, with easy access to national and regional markets. With our current friendly legal environment, many foreign investors have come to Iran, leading to an ever-increasing number of investments, joint ventures and financing agreements in multiple fields. It is the policy of my Government to continue to steadily enhance the entrepreneurial environment, protect intellectual property rights, consistently improve corporate governance and engage in a robust campaign against money-laundering in order to enhance a legal climate conducive to business and

economic investments in various fields, particularly knowledge-based enterprises.

The Iranian nation is resolutely determined to build a free and advanced Iran and participate in developing a secure and stable region based on ethics and respect for international law. In that endeavour, we welcome the participation and cooperation of all investors, intellectuals and innovators from all over the world. From this global rostrum, and as the representative of the people of Iran, who are world-famous for their hospitality, I invite all who seek peace, security and progress through partnership and cooperation among nations to visit Iran and join us in building this future of hope.

If we truly believe in our collective decision of four years ago in the General Assembly to work for a world against violence and violent extremism, we can turn the discourse of imposition, unilateralism, intimidation and war into the logic of dialogue, synergy and peace, so that moderation can become the dominant voice across the globe.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Radev: I would first like to offer my most sincere condolences to the people and Government of Mexico for yesterday's devastating earthquake.

It is an honour for me to address this forum. I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and wish him every success in his important mission.

This session is a special one for my country, since while it is still going on Bulgaria will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union. This year the general debate puts a special emphasis on our common effort to strive for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet, thereby highlighting the importance of prevention, mediation, sustainable development, preservation of the environment and respect for human rights through a people-centred approach. The United Nations upholds our shared goals of peace and security, and development and human rights.

Conflicts in many parts of the world continue to undermine international peace and security and the fundamental values of humankind. Outbreaks of violence devastate local economies, trigger large movements of refugees and migrants, and spread diseases, famine and immense human suffering on a massive scale. Children are usually the most adversely affected in any crisis situation. The root causes of armed conflicts should be addressed in a more systematic way by ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, improving the economic situation and promoting social inclusion.

Leaving no one behind and reaching the farthest behind first are not simply political declarations meant to invigorate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. If we are to transform our world by lifting it out of poverty, we must fully implement the Sustainable Development Goals by promoting equality, inclusion and participation.

Protracted conflicts require a holistic United Nations response, encompassing preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacebuilding and effective special political missions. That response is critical to restoring governance and stabilizing political, economic and social conditions in crisis and post-conflict countries.

Over the past several years the United Nations peace and security architecture has benefited from three peace and security reviews that, together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, have provided a solid foundation for achieving peace and prosperity. In that regard, Bulgaria supports the surge in diplomacy for peace, which places prevention as an overarching

priority of the United Nations work and sets the stage for the necessary reforms to sustain peace.

Prevention and mediation are essential means for reducing human suffering, including in addressing the root causes of forced displacements by bringing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts together. The situation in the Middle East and North Africa remains of deep concern and should be addressed in a comprehensive manner, but the international community should not be distracted from the urgent need to revive the Middle East peace process. Bulgaria reaffirms its position that a two-State solution formula is the realistic, just and lasting way to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is our belief that a solution that can fulfil the aspirations of both sides can be achieved only through direct negotiations, with no conditions and in conformity with the relevant international obligations.

Finding a political solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria and implementing a credible political transition in the country will be essential to preserving the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian State. We support all actions aimed at achieving a cessation of hostilities as soon as possible and conducting effective and constructive inter-Syrian negotiations in Geneva in order to achieve a lasting political solution to the crisis. We consider a political dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations to be the only way that can gradually improve the security situation in Syria and sustainably resolve the humanitarian crisis.

Another source of deep concern to my country is the situation in eastern Ukraine, which, regrettably, remains highly volatile despite periodic ceasefire agreements. We reiterate our call for the swift and full implementation of the Minsk agreements, to which there is no viable alternative. We consistently support the activity of multilateral formats such as the Normandy Four and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Trilateral Contact Group, considering their role in advancing the political and diplomatic efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict to be key.

Bulgaria is fully committed to the peace and stabilization process in Afghanistan and considers reconciliation a major prerequisite for stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan and beyond. We encourage the National Unity Government to continue with needed reforms in key areas, such as good governance, the rule of law, a credible electoral process, combating corruption and narcotics, and tackling gender and social issues.

Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are among the main pillars of international security and therefore represent tangible aspects of the effort to achieve peace and a decent life. Bulgaria reiterates its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as to the objective of attaining a world free of nuclear weapons. That goal is achievable only through the participation of all States, and the nuclear-weapon States in particular. We should aim at feasible but universal measures that will gradually and irreversibly lead to the final objective of a world without nuclear weapons. The next two steps in that direction could be the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme, concluded in July 2015, continues to be historically significant. Its full implementation is extremely important to regional and global stability, and my country reiterates its full support for it.

Bulgaria categorically condemns the repeated nuclear tests and missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have led to a further escalation of tensions in the region and are undermining world peace and security. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to end its nuclear and ballistic programmes once and for all in a complete, irreversible and verifiable manner, and to engage in constructive dialogue with the international community. We reiterate our commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation.

The recent terrorist attacks are tragic reminders of the scale of the challenge ahead. Bulgaria shares the view that the newly established Office of Counter-Terrorism marks a milestone in the efforts to improve United Nations efficiency in fighting terrorism by supporting the balanced implementation of the 2006 Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, strengthening coordination among the relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as promoting preventive measures that address the drivers of extremism.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale of organized looting of cultural

property in Iraq, Syria, Libya and other countries in conflict or post-conflict situations. We condemn the illicit trafficking and illegal trade in cultural objects as a tactic of war and a source of profits for financing terrorism. It is a threat that requires a global response. A number of legal instruments and resolutions have been adopted by UNESCO, the United Nations, the European Parliament and others. We have laid the legal foundations and it is our common duty to ensure their full implementation. The Antiquities Coalition, UNESCO's #Unite4Heritage social-media campaign and other activities epitomize a very positive global trend for action aimed at the preservation and protection of the world's cultural heritage.

International migration is a global phenomenon, and only through joint efforts such as the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration can we ensure a balanced approach that includes respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as effective border management and re-admission. States have the right and responsibility to manage and control their borders as a central element of their national security. Strict border controls are vitally important, particularly in the context of preventing irregular migration and eradicating human trafficking. For Bulgaria, the top priority is the effective management and control of the European Union's external border, enabling free movement within the European Union to function smoothly.

Climate change continues to represent one of the biggest challenges of our time. Not only is it a threat to our countries' well-being, it also poses a security risk to many of them. Bulgaria stands by its obligations under the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and believes that only a universal approach to its implementation can achieve the goals of the United Nations climate-change agenda.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to promoting human rights and is actively involved in a number of intergovernmental processes dedicated to global advancement of the human rights agenda. As co-Chair of the Group of Friends for Children and the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations, Bulgaria strongly advocates for integrating children's rights into all major intergovernmental processes, since children are the real agents of positive social change. As President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2017-2018, Bulgaria actively promotes the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

Bulgaria is determined to further contribute to promoting human rights internationally as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021, and is relying on its partners' valuable support for its candidacy. In the past few decades, the United Nations has taken crucial steps to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Those efforts should be further strengthened in order to achieve tangible results for women and girls by eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination. Ensuring equal rights for women and men should be an integral part of everyday policies in all spheres of life. Promoting equality, countering discrimination and ensuring respect for human rights are key to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development, and we believe that the protection of human rights should be at the centre of all actions undertaken by the United Nations.

The world is currently facing enormous challenges, perhaps the greatest that humankind has ever encountered, and we, the Member States of the United Nations, must provide solutions to them. It is time to take action.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

Annex 124

Letter from the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (22 Sept. 2017)

United Nations Nations Unies

HEADQUARTERS • SIEGE NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL.: 1 (212) 963.1234 • FAX: 1 (212) 963.4879

22 September 2017

Dear Carl,

Thank you for having made the time in your agenda to meet me on 18 September 2017 on the margins of the General Debate of the 72nd General Assembly, and for your subsequent letter dated 19 September 2017 regarding these discussions. As our meeting was not completely successful in conveying to you my views regarding the process and the road ahead, I should like to take this opportunity to clarify a number of points that we discussed.

To be clear, my intention is indeed for both parties to discuss the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela which has arisen as a result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is null and void, as set out in Article I of the Geneva Agreement.

It was not my intention to imply that the parties should address only the issue of the consequences of the contention. I do believe this is a topic that also merits discussion between the parties, but this is ultimately for the parties to decide.

Additionally, I did not intend to leave you with the impression that there was some amorphous "progress" emanating, as you put it, "from some undefined proposal by Venezuela" made without your knowledge and without your input. This does not reflect my views after my latest exchanges with the Government of Venezuela.

His Excellency
Mr. Carl Greenidge
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Guyana
Georgetown

United Nations Nations Unies

HEADQUARTERS • SIEGE NEW YORK, NY 10017

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As regards the meetings that I am proposing, clearly a miscommunication has left you with an incorrect understanding of my suggested way forward. I therefore wish to make the following clarifications.

I have invited both Foreign Ministers to an informal briefing in my office at United Nations Headquarters this weekend. On this occasion, I shall share some reflections on the process to date, and also present a few ideas on the way forward in the coming weeks. I shall share a proposal regarding the first formal bilateral meeting, including a list of elements for discussion, for each party to reflect on and consult on, as necessary, in capitals. I shall also use this opportunity to share an updated version of the guidelines for this process. This will be an informal exchange, so I am not expecting either Foreign Minister to be accompanied by more than one or two advisers. To clarify, it will not be a negotiation, or intended for the parties to make decisions.

My intention is to then invite both parties to subsequent first formal bilateral meeting, where each Foreign Minister would be accompanied by a team of advisers, as I intend to set out this weekend.

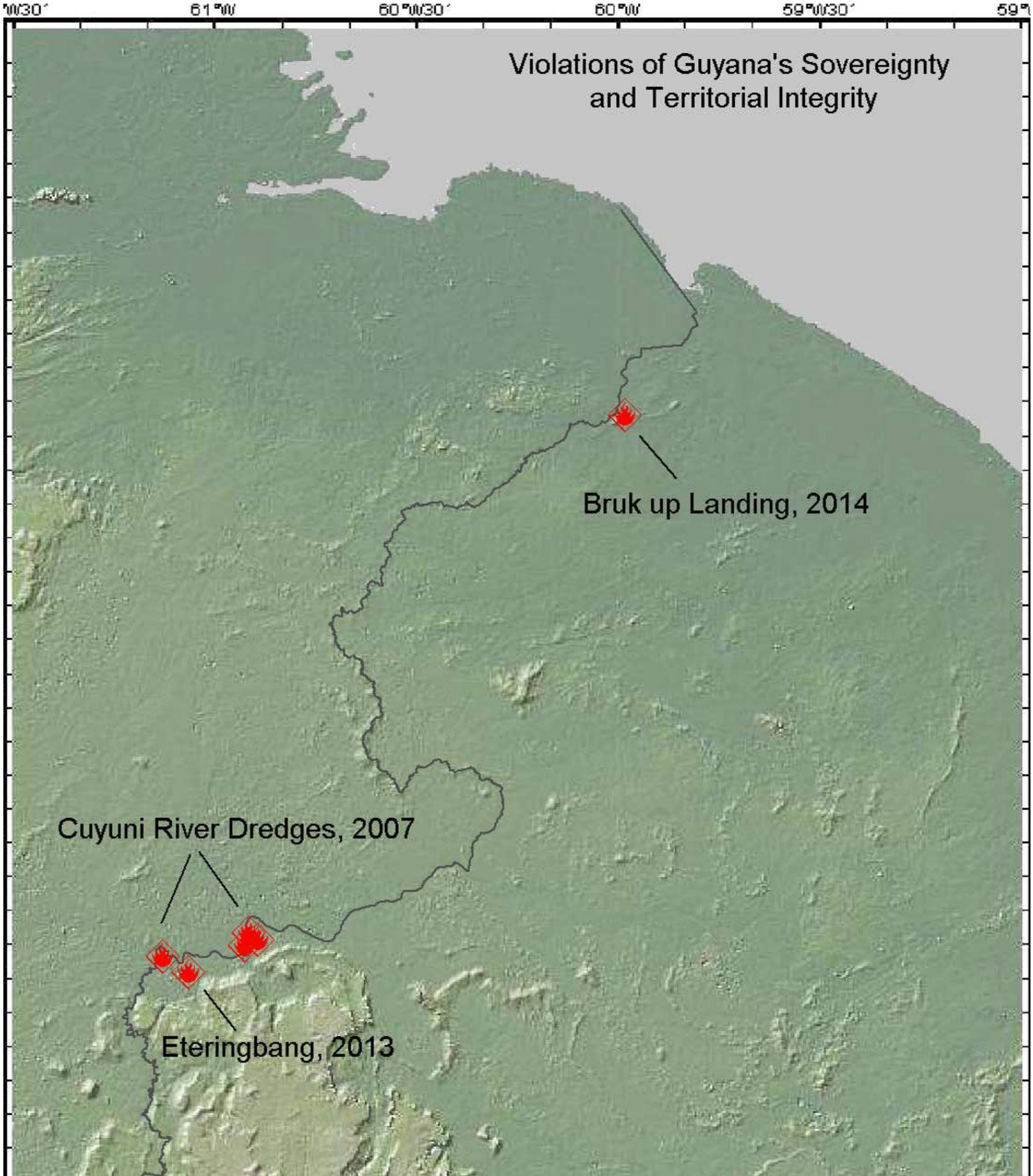
I look forward to discussing my plans for the coming weeks with you and with the Foreign Minister of Venezuela.

Yours sincerely,

Dag Nylander
Personal Representative
of the Secretary-General

Annex 125

Map of Violations of Guyana's Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity


Violations of Guyana's Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity
Bruk up Landing, 2014
Cuyuni River Dredges, 2007
Eteringbang, 2013
40 Km
61°W
60°W30´
60°W
59°W30´

Annex 126

U.N. Secretary-General, *Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the border controversy between Guyana and Venezuela* (30 Jan. 2018)

United Nations
Secretary-General

New York

30 January 2018

Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the border controversy between Guyana and Venezuela [scroll down for Spanish version]

The longstanding border controversy between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela arose as a result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is null and void. In the Geneva Agreement of 1966, Guyana and Venezuela conferred upon the Secretary-General the power and responsibility to choose a means of peaceful settlement from amongst those contemplated in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations. The Geneva Agreement also provides that if the means so chosen does not lead to a solution of the controversy, the Secretary-General is to choose another means of settlement.

Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon communicated to the parties on 15 December 2016 a framework for the resolution of the border controversy based on his conclusions on what would constitute the most appropriate next steps. Notably, he concluded that the Good Offices Process, which had been conducted since 1990, would continue for one final year, until the end of 2017, with a strengthened mandate of mediation. He also reached the conclusion that if, by the end of 2017, his successor, Secretary-General António Guterres, concluded that significant progress had not been made towards arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy, he would choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement, unless the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela jointly requested that he refrain from doing so.

In early 2017, Secretary-General Guterres appointed a Personal Representative, Mr. Dag Halvor Nylander, who engaged in intensive high-level efforts to seek a negotiated settlement to the controversy.

The Secretary-General has carefully analysed developments in 2017 in the good offices process and has concluded that significant progress has not been made toward arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy. Accordingly, the Secretary-General has fulfilled the responsibility that has fallen to him within the framework set by his predecessor in December 2016, and has chosen the International Court of Justice as the means to be used for the solution of the controversy.

In reaching this decision, the Secretary-General has also reached the conclusion that Guyana and Venezuela could benefit from the continued good offices of the United Nations through a complementary process established on the basis of the powers of the Secretary-General under the Charter of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations, remains committed to accompany both States as they seek to overcome their differences regarding this border controversy.

Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General

***

Declaración atribuible al Portavoz del Secretario General sobre la controversia fronteriza entre Guyana y Venezuela

La controversia fronteriza de larga data entre la República Cooperativa de Guyana y la República Bolivariana de Venezuela surgió como

consecuencia de la contención venezolana de que el Laudo Arbitral de 1899 sobre la frontera entre Venezuela y Guayana Británica es nulo e írrito. En el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, Guyana y Venezuela le confirieron al Secretario General la potestad y la responsabilidad de elegir un medio de solución pacífica entre aquellos contemplados en el Artículo 33 de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas. El Acuerdo de Ginebra también prevé que si el medio así escogido no conduce a una solución de la controversia, el Secretario General debe de escoger otro medio de solución.

El ex Secretario General Ban Ki-moon le comunicó a las partes el 15 de diciembre de 2016 un marco para la resolución de la controversia fronteriza basado en sus conclusiones sobre lo que constituirían los próximos pasos más adecuados. En particular, llegó a la conclusión que el Proceso de Buenos Oficios, que se había realizado desde 1990, continuaría por un último año, hasta finales del 2017, con un mandato de mediación reforzado. También llegó a la conclusión que si, a finales del 2017, el Secretario General António Guterres, como su sucesor, llegara a la conclusión que no se había alcanzado progreso significativo en llegar a una solución a la controversia, elegiría la Corte Internacional de Justicia como el próximo medio de solución, salvo que los Gobiernos de Guyana y Venezuela solicitaran conjuntamente que eso no se hiciera.

A principios de 2017, el Secretario General Guterres nombró a un Representante Personal, el Sr. Dag Halvor Nylander, quien se dedicó a una serie de esfuerzos intensivos de alto nivel para intentar llegar a un arreglo negociado a la controversia.

El Secretario General ha analizado detenidamente lo acontecido en el transcurso de 2017 en el proceso de buenos oficios y ha llegado a la conclusión que no se ha alcanzado progreso significativo en llegar a una solución a la controversia. Por consiguiente, el Secretario General ha cumplido con la responsabilidad que le ha correspondido dentro del marco establecido por su predecesor en diciembre de 2016, y ha escogido a la Corte Internacional de Justicia como el medio a ser utilizado para la resolución de la controversia.

Al llegar a esta decisión, el Secretario General también ha llegado a la conclusión que Guyana y Venezuela podrían beneficiarse de continuidad en los buenos oficios de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas mediante un proceso complementario establecido sobre la base de las facultades del Secretario General en la Carta de las Naciones Unidas.

El Secretario General, de conformidad con los principios de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas, sigue comprometido a acompañar a ambos Estados mientras buscan superar sus diferencias con respecto a esta controversia fronteriza.

Stéphane Dujarric, Portavoz del Secretario General

Annex 127

Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, *Communiqué: The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela pronounces on the territorial dispute with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana* (31 Jan. 2018)

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela pronounces on the territorial dispute with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Communique

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, informs the international community and the Venezuelan people, that on January 30, 2018, it received a communication from the Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, about the negotiation process on the controversy with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.
Through this communication, the Secretary General of the United Nations reports the following:

- After a brief review of the negotiation process developed during the year 2017, he recommends the International Court of Justice as the next means to be used for the settlement of the Territorial Dispute between Venezuela and Guyana for the Essequibo territory. Additionally, he considered that the Government of Venezuela and Guyana could benefit from continuity in the Good Offices of the UN.

In this regard, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela informs the Venezuelan people and the world of the following:

Venezuela ratifies the full validity of the Geneva Agreement of February 17, 1966, signed and ratified between our country and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in consultation with the Government of British Guiana, an international treaty that governs as Law the Territorial Controversy between the parties, validly recognized and registered before the UN, the only way to the final solution of this opprobrious heritage of British colonialism.

Venezuela duly recorded its strong opposition to the letter of December 15, 2016, signed by the former Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon, warning that the criteria contained in it exceeded the powers granted to his office, contravening the spirit, purpose and reason of the Geneva Agreement and the principle of equity concluded between the parties.

The Secretary General's communication goes beyond the successive nature of the means of peaceful settlement established by the Geneva Agreement as the established methodology for reaching an acceptable, practical and satisfactory solution to the dispute.

During the year 2017, Venezuela maintained its historical position in the process of good offices of the UN Secretary General, prioritising the high national interest and the permanent vindication of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Venezuelan people over the territory of Guayana Esequiba.

These negotiations were conducted with zealous confidentiality as an essential rule of the good offices process, by agreement between the parties and with the United Nations.

It is worth asking why the International Court of Justice was recommended to two States that do not recognize its jurisdiction, since the Geneva Agreement itself provides for the political means for the settlement of the territorial controversy. In this sense, Venezuela ratifies in a decisive and unequivocal manner the negotiation process under these means.

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, faithful to its historical tradition and in accordance with the Bolivarian Diplomacy of Peace, reiterates its firm willingness to defend the territorial integrity of our Homeland and maintain political negotiation based on the 1966 Geneva Accord, as the only way to reach a peaceful, practical and satisfactory solution for both parties and in favor of our Peoples.

The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, guarantees the Venezuelan people that they will continue defending the sovereign rights over the Guayana Esequiba and calls for national unity to protect the most sacred interests of the Nation.

Venezuela's sun rises in the Essequibo

Caracas, January 31, 2018

República Bolivariana de Venezuela

Comunicado

El Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, informa a la comunidad internacional y al Pueblo venezolano, que el día 30 de enero de 2018, recibió una comunicación del Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas, Antonio Guterres, acerca del proceso de negociación sobre la controversia territorial con la República Cooperativa de Guyana.

Mediante esta comunicación, el Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas informa lo siguiente:

- Tras una breve reseña sobre el proceso de negociación desarrollado durante el año 2017, recomienda la Corte Internacional de Justicia como próximo medio a ser utilizado para la solución de la Controversia Territorial entre Venezuela y Guyana por el territorio Esequibo. Adicionalmente consideró que el Gobierno de Venezuela y de Guyana podrían beneficiarse de continuidad en los Buenos Oficios de la ONU.

Sobre el particular, el Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela hace del conocimiento del Pueblo venezolano y del mundo, lo siguiente:

- Venezuela ratifica la plena vigencia del Acuerdo de Ginebra del 17 de febrero de 1966, suscrito y ratificado entre nuestro país y el Reino Unido de la Gran Bretaña e Irlanda del Norte, en consulta con el Gobierno de la Guayana Británica, tratado internacional que rige como **Ley la Controversia Territorial entre las partes**, válidamente reconocido y registrado ante la ONU, único camino hacia la solución definitiva sobre esta oprobiosa herencia del colonialismo británico.
- Venezuela dejó constancia oportunamente de su enérgica oposición a la carta del 15 de diciembre de 2016, suscrita por el anterior Secretario General Ban-Ki Moon, alertando que los criterios en ella contenidos excedían las competencias otorgadas a su investidura, contraviniendo el espíritu, propósito y razón del Acuerdo de Ginebra y el principio de equidad concertado entre las partes.

- La comunicación del Secretario General sobrepasa el carácter sucesivo de los medios de solución pacífica que establece el Acuerdo de Ginebra como metodología establecida para alcanzar una solución aceptable, práctica y satisfactoria de la controversia.

República Bolivariana de Venezuela

Comunicado

- Durante el año 2017, Venezuela mantuvo su posición histórica en el proceso de buenos oficios del Secretario General de la ONU, privilegiando el alto interés nacional y la permanente reivindicación de los derechos legítimos e irrenunciables del Pueblo venezolano sobre el territorio de la Guayana Esequiba.

- Estas negociaciones fueron conducidas con celosa confidencialidad como una regla esencial del proceso de buenos oficios, por acuerdo entre las partes y con las Naciones Unidas.

- Cabe preguntarse las razones que privaron para recomendar la Corte Internacional de Justicia a dos Estados que no reconocen su jurisdicción, siendo que el propio Acuerdo de Ginebra contempla los medios políticos para la solución de la controversia territorial. En este sentido, Venezuela ratifica de manera determinante e inequívoca el proceso de negociación bajo estos medios.

El Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, fiel a su tradición histórica y conforme a la Diplomacia Bolivariana de Paz, reitera su firme disposición de defender la integridad territorial de nuestra Patria y mantener la negociación política con base en el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, como único camino para alcanzar la solución pacífica, práctica y satisfactoria para ambas partes y en favor de nuestros Pueblos.

El Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, garantiza al Pueblo venezolano que continuará defendiendo los derechos soberanos sobre la Guayana Esequiba y convoca a la unidad nacional para proteger los más sagrados intereses de la Patria.

El sol de Venezuela Nace en el Esequibo

Caracas, 31 de enero de 2018

Annex 128

Commonwealth Secretariat, *Commonwealth Statement on Guyana* (14 Feb. 2018)

The Commonwealth



Commonwealth Statement on Guyana

14 February 2018

Statement by: Commonwealth Secretariat

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland, welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Gutteres, to refer the long-standing border controversy between Guyana and Venezuela to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The Secretary-General recalled that at the September 2017 meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Guyana, Ministers noted Guyana's concerns that this longstanding controversy has impacted on the country's economic development.

The Secretary-General further recalled that at the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, in Malta in November 2015, the leaders noted that *"the Geneva Agreement of 1966 between the Parties provides a range of mechanisms for an expeditious solution to the controversy arising from Venezuela's contention of invalidity of the 1899 Arbitral Award. The Heads expressed their full support for the United Nations Secretary-General to choose a means of settlement in keeping with the provisions of the Geneva Agreement 1966, to bring the controversy to a definitive end."*

The Secretary-General reiterated the unequivocal and collective support of Commonwealth member governments for the maintenance and safeguarding of Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Annex 129

Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Press Release* (17 Feb. 2018)

(https://www.minfor.gov.gy/)

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
Co-operative Republic of Guyana

NEWS

IN OBSERVANCE OF FIFTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF GENEVA AGREEMENT

17
feb



17 February 2018 is the 52nd Anniversary of the Geneva Agreement 1966 – the date of the last failed attempt from Caracas to prevent Guyana's Independence. The Agreement was a Treaty between Venezuela and Britain. Registered at the UN on 5 May 1966. Guyana became a

Party on attaining Independence on 26 May 1966. In it, Venezuela settled for resolution of their yearning for two-thirds of the new State by the processes prescribed in the Agreement – the first being a Mixed Commission for 4 years, the last being a decision by the UN Secretary General of a definitive means chosen from article 33 of the UN Charter.

The Mixed Commission ended in 1970. For 47 years after, Venezuela harassed Guyana's development, filibustered on settlement and steadily stepped up its militarism – territorially and at sea.

In 2015 Guyana called on the Secretary General to take further and final steps under the Geneva Agreement. And he did; after requiring first one then a second year of 'good offices' and 'mediation', in which Venezuela engaged. When they produced no progress toward settlement, the UN Secretary General, on 30 January 2018 – acting under the powers Venezuela and Guyana had given him under the Geneva Agreement – chose the International Court of Justice as the "means that is now to be used for the solution of the controversy'.

It has taken a long time, but with the persistence of all Governments, the Geneva Agreement has brought Guyana to a process of definitive resolution of Venezuela's challenge to Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Announcements (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Announcements/), Communique (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Communique/), Featured (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Featured/), Information Notes (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/Information-Notes/), News (Https://Www.Minfor.Gov.Gy/Category/News/)

Annex 130

Note Verbale from the Ministry of People's Power of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Embassy of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in Venezuela, No. 000322 (28 Feb. 2018)

Unofficial Translation

Bolivarian Government of Venezuela
Ministry of the People's Power
For Foreign Affairs
Office of the Vice-Minister for Latin America

Note I. DVMAL No 000322

The Ministry of People's Power of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela presents its compliments to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, on the occasion of protesting the Notice to Navigators No (03) 2017, dated February 14, 2017, which indicates that the Company *Exploration and Production Guyana (EEPGL),* will undertake a geotechnical study for forty six (46) days, from February 01, 2017, in the "Stabroek Block" so denominated by the Government of Guyana, with the vessel R/V Furgo Americas.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela categorically rejects the abovementioned permission granted by the Government of Guyana to the Company Esso Exploration and Production Guyana (EEPGL), to undertake a geotechnical study in the denominated "Stabroek Block", located in areas which are pending delimitation in the maritime front of the Essequibo territory, Zone in Reclamation subject to the Geneva Agreement of 1966, international treaty signed by Venezuela and Guyana which governs as Law the territorial controversy over the Essequibo.

It is necessary to specify that these ill-advised activities to be realized by Esso Exploration and Production Guyana (EEPGL) with the support of your government involve a flagrant violation of International Public Law, while constituting a pernicious factor aimed at obstructing the Good Offices Process which has been bringing both countries closer to achieving in a friendly manner a practical and satisfactory solution to the controversy for the Parties.

In this regard, the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela exhorts the Government of Guyana to avoid acts which can generate tensions between both brother countries. Our Homeland, in accordance with its principle of Bolivarian Diplomacy of Peace, manifests once more its firm disposition to maintain political negotiations on the basis of the Geneva Agreement of 1966, in the framework of good faith and respect for International Public Law.

The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela avails itself of this opportunity to reiterate its concern to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Caracas, February 28, 2018

To the Honourable
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Cooperative Republic of Guyana
Georgetown.-

Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela | Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores

1817 - 2017 ZAMORA

DESPACHO DEL VICEMINISTRO PARA AMÉRICA LATINA

I. DVMAL N° 000322

EL MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA, saluda atentamente al Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, en la oportunidad protestar el Aviso a los Navegantes N° 03 (2017), de fecha 14 de enero de 2017, el cual indica que la empresa *Exploration and Production Guyana (EEPGL)* realizará un estudio geotécnico durante cuarenta y seis (46) días, a partir del 1 de febrero de 2017, en el denominado por el Gobierno de Guyana *"Bloque Stabroek"*, a través del buque RV Furgo Americas.

La República Bolivariana de Venezuela rechaza de forma categórica el referido permiso otorgado por el Gobierno de Guyana a la empresa Esso Exploration and Production Guyana (EEPGL) para que realice un estudio geotécnico en el denominado *"Bloque Stabroek"*, ubicado en áreas pendientes por delimitar correspondientes a la fachada marítima del territorio Esequibo, Zona en Reclamación sujeta al Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, tratado internacional firmado por Venezuela y Guyana que rige como Ley de la controversia territorial sobre el Esequibo.

Resulta preciso indicar que las inoportunas actividades que realizaría la Esso Exploration and Production Guyana (EEPGL) bajo el aval de su Gobierno suponen una violación flagrante del Derecho Internacional público, al tiempo que constituyen un factor pernicioso orientado a entorpecer el proceso de Buenos Oficios que viene acercando a ambos países para alcanzar de forma amistosa una solución práctica y satisfactoria para las Partes de la controversia territorial.

En este sentido, el Gobierno bolivariano de Venezuela exhorta al Gobierno de Guyana a evitar actos que puedan generar tensiones entre ambos países hermanos. Nuestra Patria, acorde con su principio de la Diplomacia Bolivariana de Paz, manifiesta nuevamente su firme disposición de mantener la negociación política con base en el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, en el marco de la buena fe y el respeto del Derecho Internacional Público.

EL MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA, aprovecha la oportunidad para reiterar su preocupación al Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana.

Caracas, 28 de febrero de 2018

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES DESPACHO DEL VICEMINISTRO PARA AMÉRICA LATINA

Al Honorable
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana
Georgetown.-

Annex 131

Note Verbale from the Ministry of People's Power of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Embassy of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in Venezuela, No. 000325 (28 Feb. 2018)

Unofficial Translation

Bolivarian Government of Venezuela
Ministry of the People's Power
For Foreign Affairs
Office of the Vice-Minister for Latin America

Note I. DVMAL No 000325

The Ministry of People's Power of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela presents its compliments to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, on the occasion of referring to the publication in the Guyana Chronicle newspaper , dated March 22, 2017, of an invitation by the Regional Democratic Council of Region 3 for bidding for projects for construction and maintenance of public works in the zone subject to a territorial controversy in accordance with the existing Treaty in effect and registered in the United Nations Organisation: the Geneva Agreement of 1966.

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to emphasise that it is not opposed to the economic and social development of this sister nation. However it has the obligation to express – with erga omnes effect - that the abovementioned invitation for bids in contested territory is a flagrant violation of the Geneva Agreement of 1966, while constituting a pernicious factor aimed at obstructing the Good Offices Process which has been bringing both countries closer to achieving in a friendly manner a practical and satisfactory solution to the controversy for the Parties.

In this regard, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela urges the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to respect Article 5 of the Geneva Agreement of 1966, paragraph 2, which expresses that …. "2) No acts or activities taking place while this Agreement is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty …"

The Bolivarian Government of Venezuela, in accordance with its principle of Bolivarian Diplomacy for Peace, manifests once again its firm disposition to maintain political negotiations on the basis of the Geneva Agreement of 1966, in the framework of good faith and respect for International Public Law.

The Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela avails itself of this opportunity to reiterate its concern to the Honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Caracas, February 28, 2018

To the Honourable
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Cooperative Republic of Guyana
Georgetown.-

Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela | Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores

DESPACHO DEL VICEMINISTRO PARA AMÉRICA LATINA

1817 - 2017 ZAMORA

I. DVMAL Nº 000325

EL MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA, saluda atentamente al Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, en la oportunidad de hacer referencia a la publicación contenida en el diario Guyana Chronicle, de fecha 22 de marzo de 2017, en la cual aparece una invitación realizada por el Consejo Regional Democrático de la Región 3 para licitar proyectos de construcción y mantenimiento de obras públicas en la zona sometida a controversia territorial conforme con el Tratado vigente y registrado en la Organización de las Naciones Unidas: Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966.

El Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela desea resaltar que no se opone al desarrollo económico y social de esta nación hermana, empero, tiene la obligación de expresar -con efecto erga omnes- que la mencionada invitación a licitar en territorio controvertido supone una violación flagrante del Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, al tiempo que constituye un factor pernicioso orientado a entorpecer el proceso de Buenos Oficios que viene acercando a ambos países para alcanzar de forma amistosa una solución práctica y satisfactoria para las Partes de la controversia territorial.

En este sentido, la República Bolivariana de Venezuela insta al Gobierno de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, a respetar el artículo 5 del Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, párrafo 2, el cual expresa que: ***"...2) Ningún acto o actividad que se lleve a cabo mientras se halle en vigencia este Acuerdo constituirá fundamento para hacer valer, apoyar o negar una reclamación de soberanía territorial...".***

El Gobierno bolivariano de Venezuela, conforme con su principio de la Diplomacia Bolivariana de Paz, manifiesta nuevamente su firme disposición de mantener la negociación política con base en el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, en el marco de la buena fe y respeto del Derecho Internacional Público.

EL MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA, aprovecha la oportunidad para reiterar su preocupación al Honorable Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana.

Caracas, 28 de febrero de 2018

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES DESPACHO DEL VICEMINISTRO PARA AMÉRICA LATINA

Al Honorable
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la República Cooperativa de Guyana
Georgetown.-

Annex 132

Letter from the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the President of the International Court of Justice (18 June 2018)

COUR INTERNATIONALE DE JUSTICE | INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

150566 18 June 2018

Sir,

With reference to the case concerning the Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela), I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a letter (in English, French and Spanish) addressed to the President of the Court by H.E. Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, dated 18 June 2018 and handed in today by H.E. Ms Delcy Rodríguez, Vice President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on the occasion of this morning's meeting between the President of the Court and the representatives of the Parties.

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By his letter, the President communicated the Venezuelan Government's position with regard to the case instituted by the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, contending, in particular, that "there is no basis for the jurisdiction of the Court". The President further explained that, in light of the views expressed in his letter, "the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will not participate in the proceedings".

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Philippe Couvreur
Registrar

Hon. Carl B. Greenidge
Agent of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
before the International Court of Justice
Embassy of Guyana
Brussels, Belgium
(carlb@minfor.gov.gy)

cc: Sir Shridath Ramphal
Co-Agent of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
before the International Court of Justice
Embassy of Guyana
Brussels, Belgium
(ssramphal@msn.com)

Ms Audrey Waddell
Co-Agent of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
before the International Court of Justice
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NICOLÁS MADURO MOROS
PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

Caracas, June 18, 2018

His Excellency
Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf
President of the International Court of Justice
The Hague

Your Excellency,

I have the pleasure of addressing you in your condition as President of the Honorable International Court of Justice, in relation to the letter received last March 29, 2018, from the Court's Secretary.

In this regard, allow me, Your Excellency, to express the following:

Venezuela and Guyana are bound by mandate of the Geneva Accord to reach a friendly, practical, and satisfactory settlement to the controversy over the Guayana Esequiba.

However, Guyana, having abandoned this aim that both States are committed to through the Geneva Accord, purports that ICJ employs a procedure to hear this controversy, distancing itself form the aforementioned arrangement.

For this purpose, it has filed a case claiming that "the Court would have jurisdiction over this controversy in accordance with Article 36, paragraph one, of its Statute, in virtue of the mutual consent of Guyana and Venezuela, conferred by these in Article IV, paragraph two, of the Geneva Accord of 1966. Under that disposition of the Accord, both conferred, by mutual consent, authority to the

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PRESIDENTE DE LA
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United Nations Secretary General, to choose the means for resolving the controversy, and on January 30, 2018, the Secretary General exercised his authority to choose the judicial solution through the Court."

Thus, Guyana's argument is based on two concomitant elements: a) an alleged consent granted by Venezuela in order to come to this honorable Court, supposedly inscribed within the Geneva Accord, although, as its name indicates, this bilateral treaty aims at reaching an agreement, through friendly means; and b) the decision by the UN Secretary General to recommend the ICJ.

To this effect, above all, Venezuela wishes to recall that it has never accepted the jurisdiction of this honorable International Court of Justice, due to its historical tradition and fundamental institutions. Let alone would it accept the unilateral presentation of the request made by Guyana nor the form and content of the claims expressed therein.

Your excellency, very respectfully, we inform that given that Venezuela did not accept the jurisdiction of the Court in relation with the controversy referred to in the so-called "application" presented by Guyana, and that furthermore, it did not accept the unilateral presentation of the mentioned dispute, there exists no basis that could establish, even in prima facie, the Court's jurisdiction to consider Guyana's claims.

> *The so-called "application" presented by Guyana does not correspond in any way with the procedures regulated by the Statute, nor by the Court's Rules of Procedure, and it must be considered as bound to Article 38, paragraph 5, of the Court's Rules of Procedure, which prohibits its inclusion in the General List, as well as all procedural actions "until the State against*

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PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

which such application is made consents to the Court's jurisdiction for the purposes of the case".

In the absence of any disposition in Article IV, paragraph 2 of the Geneva Accord of 1966 (or in Article 33 of the UN Charter, to which the said disposition makes reference) on (i) the Court's jurisdiction and (ii) the modalities for resorting to the Court, the establishment of the jurisdiction of the Court requires, according to a well-established practice, both the express consent granted by both parties to the controversy in order to subject themselves to the jurisdiction of the Court, as well as joint agreement of the Parties notifying the submission of the said dispute to the Court.

The only object, purpose, and legal effect of the decision of January 30, 2018 of the United Nations Secretary General, in accordance to paragraph 2, Article IV of the Geneva Accord, is to "choose" an specific means for the friendly resolution of the controversy.

On the other hand, the Court's jurisdiction in virtue of Article 36 of the Statute and the modalities to resort to it in accordance to Article 40 of the Statute, are not regulated by the Geneva Accord. In the absence of an agreement of the Parties expressing their consent to the jurisdiction of the Court under Article 36, and in the absence of an agreement by the Parties accepting that the dispute can be raised unilaterally, and not jointly, before the Court, as established by Article 40, there is no basis for the jurisdiction of the Court with regards to the so-called "Guyana application".

Under these circumstances, and taking into account the aforementioned considerations, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

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PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPUBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

will not participate in the proceedings that the Cooperative Republic of Guyana intends to initiate through a unilateral action.

Venezuela reiterates its most strict adherence to what has been legally established for the solution of this controversy through the Geneva Accord which binds the Parties to reaching a practical and mutually satisfying agreement through friendly negotiations. In consequence, it takes this opportunity to reiterate its permanent invitation to Guyana for such a purpose, driven by its unwavering diplomacy of peace and of good neighborhood.

Your Excellency, thanking you for your attention to this communication, I wish to express that we are certain that we can reach a mutually acceptable agreement for both parties in accordance to what is established in the Geneva Accord of 1966. Fortunately, we rely on a legally binding Accord, validly deposited in the United Nations, which unequivocally regulates the Territorial Controversy between Guyana and Venezuela, where direct negotiation will allow, without a doubt, that a definitive solution is reached in favor of the peace of the peoples of Guyana and Venezuela.

I take this opportunity to express the assurances of my distinguished consideration.

REPUBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA DESPACHO DEL PRESIDENTE COMANDANTE PRESIDENTE

Nicolás Maduro Moros
President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

NICOLÁS MADURO MOROS
PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

Caracas, le 18 juin 2018

S.E. Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf
Président de la Cour internationale de Justice

Son Excellence,

J'ai le plaisir de m'adresser à vous, en votre qualité de Président de l'honorable Cour internationale de Justice, afin de faire référence à la lettre reçue, le 29 mars 2018, de la part du Greffier de la Cour.

A cet égard, je me permets, Excellence, de vous exprimer ce qui suit :

Le Venezuela et le Guyana se sont engagés, aux termes du mandat de l'Accord de Genève de 1966, à parvenir à une solution amiable, pratique et mutuellement satisfaisante pour le deux Parties, du différend concernant le territoire du Guayana Esequiba.

Néanmoins, le Guyana a abandonné cet objectif dont les deux États se sont engagés en vertu de l'Accord de Genève. Il prétend, en s'éloignant de ladite solution amiable, que la Cour internationale de Justice entreprenne une procédure au sujet du différend.

Dans ce contexte, le Guyana a déposé une requête, en arguant que « la Cour a compétence à l'égard du différend en vertu du paragraphe 1 de l'article 36 de son Statut, et conformément au consentement mutuel exprimé par le Guyana et le Venezuela au paragraphe 2 de l'article IV de l'accord de Genève de 1966. Dans cette disposition, les deux États ont simultanément conféré au Secrétaire général de l'Organisation des Nations Unies le pouvoir de choisir le moyen de règlement du différend ;

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celui-ci en a fait usage le 30 janvier 2018, optant pour le règlement judiciaire par la Cour. »

Les allégations du Guyana reposent sur deux éléments concomitants : a) un consentement présumé accordé par le Venezuela à la juridiction de cette honorable Cour, prétendument enregistrée dans l'accord de Genève ; malgré le fait que, tel qu'il est indiqué dans son nom, le but de ce traité bilatéral soit la quête d'une solution amiable ; et b) la décision du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies de proposer la Cour internationale de Justice.

A ce sujet, le Venezuela voudrait souligner qu'il n'a jamais accepté la juridiction de cette honorable Cour internationale de Justice, pour des raisons de tradition historique et d'institutions fondamentales ; et n'accepterait pas non plus ni la présentation unilatérale d'une requête faite par le Guyana, ni la forme ni le contenu des revendications qui y sont exprimés.

Excellence, très respectueusement, il est à signaler que, étant donné que le Venezuela n'a pas accepté la compétence de la Cour, en ce qui concerne le différend mentionné dans la prétendue « Requête » présentée par le Guyana, et, en outre, qu'il n'a pas non plus accepté que le différend soit soumis unilatéralement à la Cour, il n'existe aucun fondement qui pourrait établir, même si ce n'est que prima facie, la juridiction de la Cour pour connaître des demandes du Guyana.

La prétendue « Requête » présentée par le Guyana ne fait aucunement partie des procédures régies par le Statut et le Règlement de la Cour, et doit être considérée comme soumise à l'article 38, paragraphe 5, du Règlement de la Cour, qui exclut son inscription sur le rôle général de la Cour et toute action procédurale « tant que l'État contre

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PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

lequel la requête est formée n'a pas accepté la compétence de la Cour aux fins de l'affaire. »

En l'absence de toute disposition de l'article IV, paragraphe 2, de l'Accord de Genève de 1966 (ou de l'article 33 de la Charte des Nations Unies, auquel il se réfère) sur (i) la juridiction de la Cour et (ii) les modalités de sa saisine ; l'établissement de la juridiction de la Cour exige, selon une pratique bien établie, à la fois un consentement exprès à la juridiction de la Cour donné par les deux Parties au différend, et un accord commun des Parties notifiant la soumission du différend à la Cour.

Le seul objet et propos et effet juridique de la décision du Secrétaire général de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, du 30 janvier 2018, conformément au paragraphe 2 de l'article IV de l'Accord de Genève, est de « choisir » un mécanisme particulier de règlement des différends pour arriver à une solution amiable du différend.

D'autre part, la juridiction de la Cour, en vertu de l'article 36 du Statut, et les modalités de sa saisine, conformément à l'article 40 du Statut, ne sont pas régies par l'Accord de Genève. En l'absence d'un accord des Parties exprimant leur consentement à la juridiction de la Cour en vertu de l'article 36, et en l'absence d'un accord des Parties acceptant que le différend puisse être porté unilatéralement et non conjointement devant la Cour en vertu de l'article 40, il n'y a aucune base pour la juridiction de la Cour en ce qui concerne la prétendue « Requête du Guyana ».

Dans ces circonstances, et compte tenu des considérations mentionnées ci-dessus, la République Bolivarienne du Venezuela ne participera pas à la procédure dont la République coopérative du Guyana a l'intention d'engager par le biais d'une action unilatérale.

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PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPUBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

Le Venezuela réitère son attachement le plus stricte à ce qui est légalement établie dans l'Accord de Genève pour le règlement de ce différend. Cet Accord engage les deux parties à arriver à une solution pratique et mutuellement satisfaisante, par le biais des négociations amicales. Par conséquent, le Venezuela saisit l'occasion pour ratifier son invitation permanente au Guyana dans ce propos, animé par sa diplomatie imprenable de paix et de bon voisinage.

Excellence, en vous remerciant de l'attention que vous porterez à la présente communication, je tiens à vous exprimer notre certitude de parvenir à un accord mutuellement acceptable pour les deux parties, conformément à ce qui est établie dans l'Accord de Genève de 1966. Heureusement, nous disposons d'un accord juridiquement contraignant, et déposé valablement auprès des Nations Unies, qui régis, sans équivoque, le différend territorial entre le Guyana et le Venezuela, où la négociation directe permettra, sans aucun doute, de parvenir à une solution définitive en faveur de la paix des peuples du Guyana et du Venezuela.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Président, l'expression de ma considération distinguée.

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA
DESPACHO DEL PRESIDENTE
COMANDANTE PRESIDENTE

Nicolás Maduro Moros
Président de la République Bolivarienne du Venezuela

NICOLÁS MADURO MOROS
PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

Caracas, 18 de junio de 2018.

Excelentisimo
Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf
Presidente de la Corte Internacional de Justicia
La Haya

Excelencia,

Tengo el agrado de dirigirme a usted, en su condición de Presidente de la Honorable Corte Internacional de Justicia, con relación a la carta recibida el pasado 29 de marzo de 2018, de parte del Secretario de la Corte.

Sobre el particular, permítame excelencia manifestarle lo siguiente:

Venezuela y Guyana están comprometidas por mandato del Acuerdo de Ginebra a alcanzar un arreglo amistoso, práctico y satisfactorio para ambas Partes a su controversia sobre la Guayana Esequiba.

Sin embargo, Guyana abandonando este propósito que ha comprometido a ambos Estados mediante el Acuerdo de Ginebra, pretende que la CIJ allane un procedimiento para conocer de esta controversia apartándose de dicho arreglo.

Para ello, ha presentado una demanda en la que alega que "la Corte tendría jurisdicción sobre esta controversia con arreglo al artículo 36, párrafo primero, de su Estatuto, en virtud del consentimiento mutuo de Guyana y Venezuela

conferido por estos en el artículo IV, párrafo segundo, del Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966. En dicha disposición del Acuerdo, ambos confirieron, de mutuo acuerdo, autoridad al Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas para escoger el medio de solución de controversia y, el 30 de enero de 2018, el Secretario General ejerció su autoridad al escoger la solución judicial por la Corte".

De modo que el alegato de Guyana se basa en dos elementos concomitantes: a) un presunto consentimiento otorgado por Venezuela para acudir a esta honorable Corte, supuestamente inscrito dentro del Acuerdo de Ginebra, aunque, como su nombre lo indica, éste tratado bilateral se dirige a alcanzar un arreglo amistosamente y b) la decisión del Secretario General de la ONU de recomendar la CIJ.

A tales efectos, ante todo, Venezuela recuerda que nunca ha aceptado la jurisdicción de esta honorable Corte Internacional de Justicia, por motivos de su tradición histórica e instituciones fundamentales. Mucho menos aceptaría la presentación unilateral de la solicitud realizada por Guyana, como tampoco la forma y contenido de las reclamaciones allí expresadas.

Excelencia, muy respetuosamente se informa que dado que Venezuela no aceptó la competencia de la Corte en relación con la controversia a la que se refiere la llamada "demanda" presentada por Guyana, y además no aceptó la

NICOLÁS MADURO MOROS
PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

presentación unilateral de dicha disputa, no existe ninguna base que pueda establecer, aunque sea prima facie, la jurisdicción de la Corte para considerar las reclamaciones de Guyana.

La llamada "demanda" presentada por Guyana no corresponde en modo alguno a los procedimientos regulados por el Estatuto, ni por el Reglamento de la Corte y debe considerarse sujeta al Artículo 38, párrafo 5, del Reglamento de la Corte, que impide su inclusión en la Lista General así como de todo acto de procedimiento "hasta que el Estado contra el cual se haga la solicitud no haya aceptado la competencia de la Corte a los efectos del asunto de que se trate".

A falta de cualquier disposición en el Artículo IV, párrafo 2, del Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966 (o en el Artículo 33 de la Carta de la ONU, a la que dicha disposición hace referencia) sobre (i) la jurisdicción de la Corte y (ii) las modalidades para acudir a ella, el establecimiento de la jurisdicción de la Corte, requiere de acuerdo con una práctica bien establecida, tanto el consentimiento expreso otorgado por ambas partes en la controversia para someterse a la jurisdicción de la Corte, como un acuerdo conjunto de las Partes notificando la sumisión de dicha disputa a la Corte.

El único objeto, propósito y efecto legal de la decisión de 30 de enero de 2018 del Secretario General de las Naciones

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PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

Unidas, de conformidad con el párrafo 2 del Artículo IV del Acuerdo de Ginebra, es "elegir" un medio específico para la solución amistosa de la controversia.

Por otra parte, la jurisdicción de la Corte en virtud del Artículo 36 del Estatuto y las modalidades para acudir a ella conforme con el Artículo 40 del Estatuto, no están reguladas por el Acuerdo de Ginebra. En ausencia de un acuerdo de las Partes expresando su consentimiento a la jurisdicción de la Corte bajo el Artículo 36 y, a falta de un acuerdo entre las Partes aceptando que la disputa pueda ser planteada ante la Corte unilateralmente, y no conjuntamente, según establece el Artículo 40, no hay base alguna para la jurisdicción de la Corte en lo que se refiere a la llamada "demanda de Guyana".

Bajo estas circunstancias, y teniendo en cuenta las anteriores consideraciones, la República Bolivariana de Venezuela no participará en el procedimiento que pretende incoar la República Cooperativa de Guyana mediante una acción unilateral

Venezuela reitera su más estricto apego a lo establecido legalmente para la solución de esta controversia mediante el Acuerdo de Ginebra que compromete a las Partes a alcanzar un arreglo práctico y mutuamente satisfactorio mediante negociaciones amistosas. En consecuencia, aprovecha la oportunidad para

NICOLÁS MADURO MOROS
PRESIDENTE DE LA
REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

reiterar su permanente invitación a Guyana con dicho propósito, animada por su inexpugnable diplomacia de paz y buena vecindad.

Excelencia, al agradecer su atención a la presente comunicación deseo manifestarle que estamos seguros de poder alcanzar un acuerdo mutuamente aceptable para ambas partes conforme lo establece el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966. Afortunadamente contamos con un Acuerdo jurídicamente vinculante, y válidamente depositado en las Naciones Unidas, que regula sin equívocos la Controversia Territorial, entre Guyana y Venezuela, donde la negociación directa permitirá, sin duda, alcanzar una resolución definitiva en favor de la paz de los pueblos de Guyana y Venezuela.

Hago propicia la ocasión para expresarle las seguridades de mi distinguida consideración.

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA
DESPACHO DEL PRESIDENTE
COMANDANTE PRESIDENTE

Nicolás Maduro Moros

Annex 133

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, National Assembly, *Parliamentary Agreement of Rejection of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana of Judizializing the Essequibo and Their Reaffirmation of the Venezuelan Sovereignty on Anacoco Island and the Atlantic Front* (19 June 2018)

National Assembly

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Chairmanship

Strategic Directorate of International Relations

DERI/181/18

The Strategic Directorate of International Relations presents its compliments to the Embassies and International Organizations accredited in Venezuela, on the occasion of forwarding, attached to this letter, "PARLIAMENTARY AGREEMENT OF REJECTION OF THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA OF JUDIZIALIZING THE ESSEQUIBO AND THEIR REAFFIRMATION OF THE VENEZUELAN SOVEREIGNTY ON ANACOCO ISLAND AND THE ATLANTIC FRONT", signed by the members of the Directors' Board of the National Assembly, dated June 19th 2018.

The Strategic Directorate of International Relations avails itself of the occasion to reiterate the assurances of its highest consideration to the Embassies and International Organizations.

Caracas, June 21st 2018

Faithfully,

<Here signature>

Amb. Nelson Valera

Strategic Director of International Relations (E)

National Assembly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
National Assembly
Caracas – Venezuela

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA
in the defence of the Constitution, Democracy and Rule of Law

PARLIAMENTARY AGREEMENT OF REJECTION OF THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA OF JUDIZIALIZING THE ESSEQUIBO AND THEIR REAFFIRMATION OF THE VENEZUELAN SOVEREIGNTY ON ANACOCO ISLAND AND THE ATLANTIC FRONT

CONSIDERING

That the National Assembly, only legitimate power of the people of Venezuela, in the face of the announcement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres made on January 30th 2018, in which it is proposed to forward the dispute between Venezuela and Guyana for the Essequibo region to the International Court of Justice, in spite of not having been exhausted all non-jurisdictional means of peaceful solution foreseen in article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, considers that this a hasty decision that contradicts the very Geneva Agreement of 1966 which mentions in its article 1 "a practical Arrangement of the controversy".

CONSIDERING

That the forwarding of the legitimate and just claim of Venezuela on the territory of the Essequibo to the International Court of Justice generated that the Cooperative Republic of Guyana unilaterally initiate a contentious procedure to the aforementioned Court on March 29 2018, by means of which requests that "according to the legal validity and binding effect of the political decision to the border between the colony of British Guyana and the United

States of Venezuela on October 3rd of 1899", evidences the negligence and inefficiency of the regimen of Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro in reaffirming the territorial integrity of our country according with the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which commits our people and future generations' rights on the natural resources of the zone in claim; as well as the historical foundation of the territory bequeathed by Liberator Simon Bolivar;

CONSIDERING

That as Public Power of the State, the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aware of its constitutional obligation, must safeguard the inalienable right of territorial integrity of the Nation according with Article 1 of the Constitution, and the exercise of the full sovereignty on the territory and geographic spaces of the Republic defined in article 10 of it, as the one corresponding to the General Captaincy of Venezuela, before the political transformation initiated on April 19th 1810, with the resulting modifications of the nullity-flawed treaties and arbitral awards; as well as the non-transferability to other States that are enshrined in articles 11 and 13 of the Magna Carta;

CONSIDERING

That both the Venezuelan citizens as well as the Public Powers have the duty to defend, safeguard and protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Nation and comply with the Magna Carta, as required by articles 130 and 131 of the Constitution;

CONSIDERING

That the National Assembly, as member of the Defence Council of the Nation, highest organ of consultation for the planning and advising of the Public Power in the matters related with the integral defence of the Nation, its sovereignty and integrity of its geographical space, according with article 323 of the Constitution, and according with paragraph 24 of article 187 of it, must intervene in the definition of the strategy that preserve the rights of the Nation, and therefore, express its opinion in the topic;

CONSIDERING

That the State's essential aims and the Nation's inalienable rights and the exercise of the full sovereignty on the territory and geographical spaces of the Republic, are themes of State in which the Legislative Power must participate to defend the national interest in spite of the differences with the Executive Power, without convalidating any illegitimacy;

CONSIDERING

That the National Assembly, as representation of the Venezuelan people's sovereignty, exerts the functions of control on the management of the government and the foreign policy, according with article 187 of the Constitution, and therefore, it can, in the exercise of these functions, request other Public Powers in the face of the lawsuit filed in the International Court of Justice by the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, to comply with the obligations as

pertains to their responsibilities, concretely, to guarantee the independence, integrity, sovereignty of the territory and defence of the Republic according with article 232 of the Constitution;

CONSIDERING

That Venezuela has always rejected the submitting the border controversy on the Essequibo to the International Court of Justice, from the time the conversations with the Great Britain initiated previous to the independence of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, as recorded in the spirit and letter of the Geneva Agreement, given the nature of the controversy, and furthermore, up to the date Venezuela has never recognized the jurisdiction of the referred International Court of Justice.

CONSIDERING

That Venezuela is not a signatory of the Facultative Clause of Obligatory Jurisdiction, enshrined in article 36 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, on which has made express reserve, or has not accepted to be part of multilateral treaties that recognize the jurisdiction of the Court as the Pact of Bogota and the Convention of the Sea;

CONSIDERING

That to confuse the peaceful means of the Judicial Settlement that requires the consent of the parties, with the Judicial Contention in order to attempt to justify the judicialization of the controversy results in a selfish interpretation;

CONSIDERING

That in its lawsuit, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana has also presented another claim around alleged rights on the Anacoco Island, which has the only explanation of a provocation within an inappropriate lawsuit;

CONSIDERING

That the arrangements made by Mr. Dag Havland Nylander, personal representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in February 2017, were not transparent by not making the consultations with the different sectors of the country, as made with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

AGREES

FIRST: To ratify that in virtue of the spirit and rules established in the Geneva Agreement of 1966, the signing parties, including the government of the British Guyana represented by its First Minister Mr Forbes Burnham, undertook to "seek satisfactory solutions for the practical settlement of the controversy", which cannot be the submitting to the International Court of Justice of our just and legitimate claim on the Essequibo.

SECOND: To ratify the Agreement of the National Assembly on date February 6 2018, by means of which it declares the inappropriateness of the decision of the UN Secretary-General, of forwarding the claim of the Essequibo territory to the International Court of Justice.

THIRD: To reject the conduct of the Ministry of the People's Power for the Foreign Relations, which despite the multiple invitations made by the Mixed Commission for the Defence of the Essequibo and the Atlantic Front, did not provide the requested information on the measures taken in the defence of the Essequibo territory.

FORTH: To reaffirm as strategic criteria that the lawsuit filed by the Cooperative Republic of Guyana prevents the parties from reaching a practical settlement of the controversy in a mutually satisfactory manner, since it denaturalizes the Geneva Agreement, which according with the foreseen in article IV of this Agreement, in accordance with article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, and article 152 of the Constitution, the controversy must be maintained within the ambit of mechanisms of political-diplomatic nature.

Fifth: To request the summoning of the Defence Council of the Nation to analyse the different scenarios and determine the strategy of defence of the inalienable rights of the Nation in the face of the current circumstances and conditions of our historical and legitimate claim of the Essequibo, understood as a State issue that directly compromises this popular representation.

SIXTH: To incorporate the theme of the controversy of the Essequibo in the parliamentary agenda, with the purpose of maintaining the historical position of Venezuela at international level alive, furthermore taking into account the inconvenience of the judicialization of the controversy, and denouncing the violation the Cooperative Republic of Guyana has made of the Geneva Agreement, as well as its origin in oil interests.

SEVENTH: To ratify in an express manner the sovereignty titles of Anacoco Island and the Atlantic Front, as well as to strongly reject the unfriendly and baseless intention of the government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana of ignoring them, at the same time we make a call to the Bolivarian National Armed Force to maintain the works of security and defence of this territory that are not under discussion.

EIGHTH: To demand from the Ministry of the People's Power for the Foreign Affairs to inform the companies and governments that can be involved in the oil concessions that the Cooperative Republic of Guyana has illegally granted during the last years in our zone of territorial dispute with Guyana, of the risk that any type of investment in a territory in dispute has; for which reason it is urged to object them and request the paralysation of their works according with article V paragraph 2 of the Geneva Agreement and Decree 1152 of 1968 on the Territorial Sea enlarged in 1988 to the Continental Platform, so depriving this of legal security.

NINTH: To instruct the Mixed Commission of the National Assembly for the Defence of the Essequibo and its Atlantic Front, to initiate the preparation of a draft law that clearly establish the corresponding spaces to the Atlantic Front, and likewise call activists and experts in the matter with the objective of writing the necessary laws related with the reaffirming of our territorial and maritime integrity.

TENTH: To open the corresponding parliamentary investigation that establishes the appropriate responsibilities of the officials attached to the National Executive for the negligence and inefficiency in the defence of the territory of the Essequibo; of allowing the oil and gas exploration and production in waters of the territory Essequibo and remain indifferent to the different statements of the Secretaries General of the United Nations Organization of forwarding the territorial controversy to the International Court of Justice.

Eleventh: To forward copy of the present Agreement to all the Public Powers of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Twelfth: To give publicity to this Agreement.

Given, signed, and stamped at the Legislative Federal Palace, venue of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in Caracas, on nineteenth of the month of June of twenty-eighteen. Years 208th from Independency and 159th from Federation.

<Signatures and stamp>

OMAR ENRIQUE BARBOZA GUTIÉRREZ
President of the National Assembly

JULIO CÉSAR REYES
First Vice-President

ALFONSO J. MARQUINA
Second Vice-President

NEGAL MANUEL MORALES LLOVERA
Secretary

JOSE LUIS CARTAYA
Sub-Secretary

REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA
ASAMBLEA NACIONAL

ACUERDO PARLAMENTARIO DE RECHAZO SOBRE LA PRETENSIÓN DE LA REPÚBLICA COOPERATIVA DE GUYANA DE JUDICIALIZARLA CONTROVERSIA SOBRE EL ESEQUIBO Y LA REAFIRMACIÓN DE LA SOBERANÍ

Fecha: 19/06/2018

LA ASAMBLEA NACIONA

DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

En defensa de la Constitución, la Democracia y el Estado de Derecho

ACUERDO PARLAMENTARIO DE RECHAZO SOBRE LA PRETENSIÓN DE LA REPÚBLICA COOPERATIVA DE GUYANA DE JUDICIALIZAR LA CONTROVERSIA SOBRE EL ESEQUIBO Y LA REAFIRMACIÓN DE LA SOBERANÍA VENEZOLANA SOBRE LA ISLA DE ANACOCO Y LA FACHADA ATLÁNTICA

CONSIDERANDO

Que la Asamblea Nacional, único poder legítimo del pueblo de Venezuela, ante el anuncio del Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas Antonio Guterres, realizado el 30 de enero 2018, en el cual plantea remitir la disputa entre Venezuela y Guyana por la región del Esequibo a la Corte Internacional de Justicia, a pesar de no haber agotado todos lo medios de solución pacífica no jurisdiccionales previstos en el artículo 33 de la Carta de las Naciones unidas, considera esta, una decisión apresurada y que contradice el propio Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966 que plantea en su artículo 1 "un Arreglo práctico de la controversia";

CONSIDERANDO

Que la remisión de la legítima y justa reclamación de Venezuela sobre el territorio del Esequibo a la Corte Internacional de Justicia dio lugar para que la República Cooperativa de Guyana iniciara unilateralmente un procedimiento por la vía contenciosa ante la mencionada Corte el 29 de marzo de 2018, mediante el cual solicita que "confirme la validez legal y el efecto vinculante de la decisión política a la frontera entre la colonia de la Guayana Británica y los Estados Unidos de Venezuela del 3 de octubre de 1899", evidencia la negligencia e ineficacia del régimen de Hugo Chávez y Nicolás Maduro en reafirmar la integridad territorial de nuestro país de acuerdo con la Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, lo cual compromete el derecho que tiene nuestro pueblo y futuras generaciones sobre los recursos naturales de la zona en reclamación; así como, también, el fundamento histórico del territorio legado por el Libertador Simón Bolívar;

CONSIDERANDO

Que como Poder Público del Estado, la Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela consciente de su obligación constitucional, debe velar por el derecho irrenunciable de integridad territorial de la Nación conforme el Artículo 1 de la Constitución, y por el ejercicio de la soberanía plena sobre el territorio y espacios geográficos de la República definido en el Artículo 10 de la misma, como el que correspondía a la Capitanía General de Venezuela, antes de la transformación política iniciada el 19 de abril de 1810, con las modificaciones resultantes de los tratados y laudos arbitrales no viciados de

nulidad; así como de su intransferibilidad a otros Estados que se consagra en los artículos 11 y 13 de la Carta Magna;

CONSIDERANDO

Que tanto los ciudadanos venezolanos como los Poderes Públicos tienen el deber de defender, resguardar y proteger la soberanía y la integridad territorial de la Nación y de cumplir la Carta Magna, como lo demandan los artículos 130 y 131 de la Constitución;

CONSIDERANDO

Que la Asamblea Nacional, como integrante del Consejo de Defensa de la Nación, máximo órgano de consulta para la planificación y asesoramiento del Poder Público en los asuntos relacionados con la defensa integral de la Nación, su soberanía y la integridad de su espacio geográfico, conforme al artículo 323 de la Constitución, y en concordancia con el numeral 24 del artículo 187 de la misma, debe intervenir en la definición de la estrategia que preserve los derechos de la Nación, y por ende, expresar su opinión al respecto;

CONSIDERANDO

Que los fines esenciales del Estado y los derechos irrenunciables de la Nación de integridad territorial y del ejercicio de la soberanía plena sobre el territorio y espacios geográficos de la República, son temas de Estado en los cuales el Poder Legislativo debe participar para defender el interés nacional a pesar de las diferencias con el Poder Ejecutivo, sin que ello signifique convalidar ilegitimidad alguna;

CONSIDERANDO

Que la Asamblea Nacional, como representación de la soberanía del pueblo venezolano, ejerce las funciones de control sobre la gestión del gobierno y de la política exterior, conforme al artículo 187 de la Constitución, y por tanto, puede, en ejercicio de estas funciones, exigir a otros Poderes Públicos ante la demanda presentada en la Corte Internacional de Justicia por la República Cooperativa de Guyana, a que cumplan con las obligaciones inherentes a sus responsabilidades, concretamente, de garantizar la independencia, integridad, soberanía del territorio y defensa de la República conforme al artículo 232 de la Constitución;

CONSIDERANDO

Que Venezuela siempre ha rechazado someter la controversia fronteriza sobre El Esequibo a la Corte Internacional de Justicia, desde que se iniciaron las conversaciones con la Gran Bretaña previo a la independencia de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, como quedó plasmado en el espíritu y letra del Acuerdo de Ginebra, dada la naturaleza de la controversia, y que además hasta la fecha Venezuela nunca ha reconocido la jurisdicción de la referida Corte Internacional de Justicia;

CONSIDERANDO

Que Venezuela no es signataria de la Cláusula Facultativa de Jurisdicción Obligatoria, consagrada en el artículo 36 numeral 2 del Estatuto de la Corte Internacional de Justicia, sobre la cual ha hecho expresa reserva, o no ha aceptado formar parte de tratados multilaterales que reconocen la jurisdicción de la Corte como el Pacto de Bogotá y la Convención del Mar;

CONSIDERANDO

Que resulta una interpretación interesada, por parte de la República Cooperativa de Guyana, confundir el medio pacífico del Arreglo Judicial que requiere el consentimiento de las partes, con la Contención Judicial para intentar justificar la judicialización de la controversia;

CONSIDERANDO

Que en su demanda, la República Cooperativa de Guyana también ha presentado otra reclamación en torno a supuestos derechos sobre la isla de Anacoco, lo cual solo tiene explicación como una provocación dentro de una demanda improcedente;

CONSIDERANDO

Que las gestiones realizadas por el Sr. Dag Havland Nylander Representante personal del Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas en febrero del 2017, no fueron transparentes al no haber realizado las consultas con los diversos sectores del país, como si lo hizo con la República Cooperativa de Guyana.

ACUERDA

PRIMERO. Ratificar que en virtud del espíritu y las reglas establecidas en el Acuerdo de Ginebra de 1966, las Partes firmantes, incluido el gobierno de la Guayana Británica representada por su Primer Ministro Mr Forbes Burnham, se

comprometieron "a buscar soluciones satisfactorias para el arreglo práctico de la controversia", que no puede ser el sometimiento a la Corte Internacional de Justicia, nuestra justa y legítima reclamación sobre el Esequibo.

SEGUNDO. Ratificar el Acuerdo de la Asamblea Nacional de fecha 6 de febrero de 2018, mediante el cual declara la improcedencia de la decisión del Secretario General de la ONU, de remitir la reclamación del Territorio Esequibo a la Corte Internacional de Justicia.

TERCERO. Rechazar la conducta del Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Relaciones Exteriores, el cual a pesar de las múltiples invitaciones realizadas por la Comisión Mixta para la Defensa del Esequibo y la Fachada Atlántica, no proporcionó la información solicitada sobre las gestiones realizadas en defensa del territorio Esequibo.

CUARTO. Reafirmar como criterio estratégico que la demanda incoada por la República Cooperativa de Guyana impide que las partes logren alcanzar un acuerdo práctico de la controversia en forma mutuamente satisfactoria, ya que desnaturaliza el Acuerdo de Ginebra, que conforme a lo previsto en el artículo IV del presente Acuerdo, en concordancia con el artículo 33 de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas, y el artículo 152 de la Constitución, ha de mantenerse la controversia dentro del ámbito de mecanismos de naturaleza político-diplomática.

QUINTO. Solicitar la convocatoria del Consejo de Defensa de la Nación para analizar los diferentes escenarios y determinar la estrategia de defensa de los derechos irrenunciables de la Nación ante las actuales circunstancias y condiciones de nuestra histórica y legitima reclamación del Esequibo, entendido como un asunto de Estado que directamente compromete a esta representación popular.

SEXTO. Incorporar el tema de la controversia del Esequibo en la agenda parlamentaria, con el propósito de mantener viva la posición histórica de Venezuela a nivel internacional, tomando en cuenta además, la inconveniencia de la judicialización de la controversia, y denunciando la violación que ha venido haciendo la República Cooperativa de Guyana del Acuerdo de Ginebra, así como su origen en intereses petroleros.

SÉPTIMO. Ratificar de manera expresa los títulos de soberanía de Venezuela sobre la Isla de Anacoco y la Fachada Atlántica; así como rechazar categóricamente la intención inamistosa e infundada del gobierno de la República Cooperativa de Guyana en desconocerlos; al tiempo que hacemos un llamado a la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana a mantener las labores de seguridad y defensa de este territorio que no se encuentra en discusión.

OCTAVO. Exigir al Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Relaciones Exteriores que informen a las empresas y gobiernos que puedan estar involucrados en las concesiones petroleras que la República Cooperativa de Guyana ha venido otorgando ilegalmente durante los últimos años en nuestra zona de disputa territorial con Guyana, del riesgo que corre cualquier tipo de inversión en un territorio que se encuentra en disputa; por lo que se insta a objetar las mismas y se exige la paralización de sus trabajos de conformidad con el artículo V numeral 2 del Acuerdo de Ginebra y el Decreto 1.152 de 1968 sobre Mar Territorial ampliado en 1988 a la Plataforma Continental, privando así a las mismas de seguridad jurídica.

NOVENO. Instruir a la Comisión Mixta de la Asamblea Nacional para la Defensa del Esequibo y su Fachada Atlántica, a iniciar la preparación de un proyecto de ley que fije claramente los espacios correspondientes a la Fachada Atlántica, e igualmente convoque a activistas y expertos en la materia con el objeto de elaborar los proyectos de leyes necesarios que tengan que ver con la reafirmación de nuestra integridad territorial y marítima.

DÉCIMO. Abrir la correspondiente investigación parlamentaria que establezca las responsabilidades a que haya lugar de los funcionarios adscritos al Ejecutivo Nacional por la negligencia e ineficacia en la defensa del territorio del Esequibo; de permitir la exploración y producción de petróleo y gas en aguas del territorio Esequibo y permanecer inertes ante las diversas declaraciones de los Secretarios Generales de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas de remitir la controversia territorial a la Corte Internacional de Justicia.

UNDÉCIMO. Remitir copia del presente Acuerdo a todos los Poderes Públicos de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela.

DUODÉCIMO. Dar publicidad al presente Acuerdo.

Dado, firmado y sellado en el Palacio Federal Legislativo, sede de la Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, en Caracas, a los diecinueve días del mes de junio de dos mil dieciocho. Años 208° de la Independencia y 159° de la Federación.

OMAR ENRIQUE BARBOZA GUTIÉRREZ

Presidente de la Asamblea Nacional

JULIO CÉSAR REYES

Primer Vicepresidente

ALFONSO JOSÉ MARQUINA

Segundo Vicepresidente

NEGAL MANUEL MORALES LLOVERA

Secretario

JOSÉ LUIS CARTAYA

Subsecretario

Annex 134

World Atlas, “The World’s Largest Oil Reserves by Country” (23 Oct. 2018), *available at* https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-world-s-largest-oil-reserves-by-country.html (last accessed 3 Nov. 2018)

ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Oil Reserves By Country

Proven oil reserves are those that have a reasonable certainty of being recoverable under existing economic and political conditions, with existing technology.



Many oil-producing nations provide unaudited claims for their oil reserves.

The volatility in oil prices over the past decade has created plenty of concern for businesspeople, national governments, and global policymakers alike. With such uncertainty in pricing, coupled with environmental concerns as our world's appetite for fossil fuels grows, the questions of whether there are enough petroleum oil reserves to satisfy demand, and what the consequences of its extraction will be, have never been more pertinent. In order to shed more light into a somewhat ambiguous subject, we have profiled the ten countries with the largest oil reserves in the world to help put their positions within the energy landscape into perspective. The volatility in oil prices over the past decade has created plenty of concern for governments and policymakers at the global stage. This lack of certainty, coupled with environmental concerns as the world grows ever more energy hungry, the question of whether there are enough petroleum oil reserves to satisfy the demand and what the consequences will be has never been more pertinent. In a bid to shed more light in this somewhat nebulous sector, we have profiled countries with the highest oil reserves in the world. These are the countries whose proven oil reserves are in the top 10 globally.

10. United States - 39,230 billion barrels

U.S. oil reserves soared to new heights in recent years due to increased usage of unconventional

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The Highest Capital Cities in the World

9. Libya - 48,363 billion barrels

Libya has the largest oil reserves in Africa and the ninth largest globally. It has the potential to have a greater reserve of fossil fuel than we currently know of, as it remains largely unexplored as a result of past sanctions against foreign oil companies. Libyan oil accounted for 98% of government revenue in 2012 but, due to recent political instability, Libya's power as an oil producer has been significantly hampered. Eventually, it is expected that untapped oil reserves will foster more economic investment as the political situation stabilizes.

8. Russia - 80,000 billion barrels

Russia is a country filled with natural resources for energy use, most notably the country's massive oil reserves under the vast Siberian plains. Russian oil output fell considerably after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, but the country has revamped production in the past few years. The nation may further boost its reserves of oil and gas in the future as exploration continues beneath its holdings of arctic waters and ice.

7. United Arab Emirates - 97,800 billion barrels

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) sources most of its oil from the Zakum field, which has an estimated 66 billion barrels, making it the third largest oil field in the region, behind only Ghawar Field (Saudi Arabia) and Burgan Field (Kuwait). Roughly 40 per cent of the country's GDP is based on oil and gas output and, since its discovery there in 1958, has enabled the UAE to become a modern state with a high standard of living.

6. Kuwait - 101,500 billion barrels

While a small country in terms of land area, Kuwait holds more than a fair share of the world's petroleum oil reserves. Over 5 bbl of reserves lie within the Saudi-Kuwaiti neutral zone which Kuwait shares with Saudi Arabia, while over 70 billion barrels of Kuwaiti oil are in the Burgan field, the second largest oil field in the world.

5. Iraq - 142,503 billion barrels

Despite shaky political situations in its recent history, the country of Iraq sits upon some of the world's largest proven reserves of petroleum crude oil. As a matter of fact, owing to the civil unrest and military occupations which have characterized the national scene over the last few decades, it was not possible to do any meaningful exploration of the Iraq's oil reserves. As a result, even the data used to determine Iraq's global oil holdings ranking is at least three decades old and based on 2D seismic surveys. Nevertheless, a period of relative calm over the last couple of years has given increased hope for developing the country's oil infrastructure.

4. Iran - 158,400 billion barrels

Iran has close to 160,000 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, making it considerably wealthy in terms of global oil resources. When looking at the most easily accessible reserves (excluding many of the unconventional, difficult-to-extract reserves in Canada), Iran falls right behind behind Venezuela and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Oil in Iran was first produced in 1908 and, at its current rate of extraction, Iran's oil will last close to 100 years more. Unlike Saudi oil, which is spread throughout a few huge and very rich oil fields, Iranian oil is found in close to 150 hydrocarbon fields, many of which have both petroleum crude oil and natural gas.

3. Canada - 169,709 billion barrels

Canada has almost 170,000 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, of which the most significant proportion is in the form of oil sands deposits in the province of Alberta. Furthermore, most of the country's conventionally accessible oil reserves are located in Alberta.

As extracting oil from the vast majority of Canada's oil reserves is a labor and capital-intensive process, production tends to come in sporadic bursts rather than steady streams. Oil companies, therefore, begin by extracting lower density, higher value oils first, and directing their efforts into extracting crude deposits only in times of high commodity prices.

2. Saudi Arabia - 266,455 billion barrels

world's leader in oil potential.

While the Saudis' 266,455 billion barrels of proven oil reserves are marginally smaller than those of Venezuela, all of Saudi oil is in conventionally accessible oil wells within large oil fields. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's reserves are considered to comprise a fifth of the entire globe's conventional reserves. There are many who also believe that, with further exploration, Saudi Arabia will surpass Venezuela at the top of the proven oil holdings charts. For example, the US Geological Survey estimates that there are well over 100,000 billion barrels lying undiscovered beneath the arid sands of Saudi deserts.

1. Venezuela - 300,878 billion barrels

With 300,878 billion barrels of proven reserves, Venezuela has the largest amount of proven oil reserves in the world. The country's oil is a relatively new discovery. Previously, Saudi Arabia had always held the number one position.

The oil sand deposits in Venezuela are similar to those in Canada. Venezuela also boasts plenty of conventional oil deposits. Venezuela's Orinoco tar sands are significantly less viscous than Canada's, so the oil sands there can be extracted using conventional oil extraction methods, giving it a considerable advantage over the Northern American rival in terms of capital requirements and extractions costs.

Countries With The Largest Proven Oil Reserves

Rank	Country	Barrels (Billions of Barrels)
1	Venezuela	300,878
2	Saudi Arabia	266,455
3	Canada	169,709
4	Iran	158,400
5	Iraq	142,503
6	Kuwait	101,500
7	United Arab Emirates	97,800
8	Russia	80,000
9	Libya	48,363
10	United States	39,230
11	Nigeria	37,062
12	Kazakhstan	30,000
13	China	25,620
14	Qatar	25,244
15	Brazil	12,999
16	Algeria	12,200
17	Angola	8,273
18	Ecuador	8,273
19	Mexico	7,640
20	Azerbaijan	7,000